MARVEL MASTERWORKS®

THE FANTASTIC FOUR®

VOLUME 18

THE FANTASTIC FOUR Nos. 192-203
& ANNUAL Nos. 12-13
MARV WOLFMAN & KEITH POLLARD

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PRESENTS

THE FANTASTIC FOUR

VOLUME 18

COLLECTING

THE FANTASTIC FOUR Nos. 192-203

& ANNUAL Nos. 12-13

MARV WOLFMAN • KEITH POLLARD

Collection Editor
Cory Sedlmeier
Book Design
Nickel DesignWorks
SVP Print, Sales & Marketing
David Gabriel
Digital Manager/Production
Tim Smith 3
Digital Production
Kou Chen
Editor in Chief
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Chief Creative Officer
Joe Quesada
Publisher
Dan Buckley
Executive Producer
Alan Fine

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CREDITS

THE
FANTASTIC FOUR
NOS. 192-203 & ANNUAL NOS. 12-13

Writers: **Marv Wolfman** (Nos. 195-203, *Annual* No. 12)
Len Wein (Nos. 192-194)
Roger Slifer (No. 192)
Keith Pollard (Nos. 193, 194)
Bill Mantlo (Nos. 193, 194, *Annual* No. 13)

Pencilers/Layouts: **Keith Pollard** (Nos. 193-201, 203, *Annual* No. 12)
George Pérez (No. 192)
John Buscema (No. 202)
Bob Hall (*Annual* No. 12)
Sal Buscema (*Annual* No. 13)

Inkers/Finshers: Joe Sinnott (Nos. 192, 193, 197-203, *Annual* No. 13)
Dave Hunt (No. 194)
Pablo Marcos (Nos. 195, 196)
Bob Wiacek (*Annual* No. 12)

Letterers: Joe Rosen (Nos. 192, 193, 196)
Annette Kawecki (No. 194)
Denise Wohl (No. 195)
John Costanza (Nos. 197, 199-201, 203, *Annual* No. 12)
Rick Parker (No. 198)
Jim Novak (No. 202)
Irving Watanabe (*Annual* No. 13)

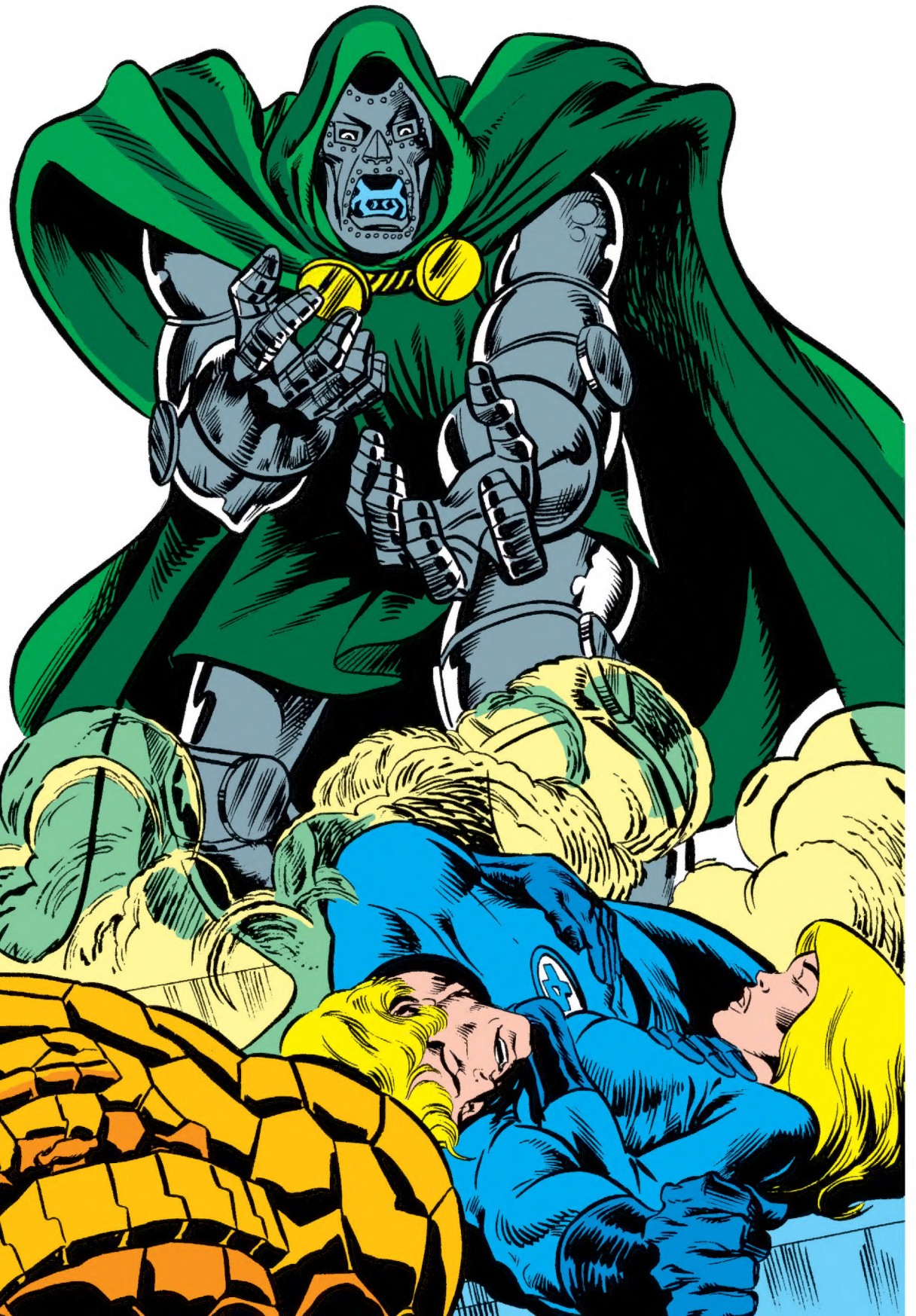
Colorists: Glynis Wein (Nos. 192, 196, 203, *Annual* No. 12)
Françoise Mouly (Nos. 193, 200, 201, *Annual* No. 13)
Janice Cohen (Nos. 193, 198, 199, 202)
George Roussos (No. 194)
Phil Rachelson (No. 195)
Barry Grossman (No. 197)

Editor: Marv Wolfman

Color & Art Reconstruction: All Thumbs Creative (Nos. 192-203, *Annual* No. 13)
Wesley Wong (*Annual* No. 12)

Special Thanks: Michael Finn & Nick Elkins

FANTASTIC FOUR CREATED BY STAN LEE & JACK KIRBY



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THE FANTASTICS
BY MARV WOLFMAN

Back in the early 1950s, when I started to read comics, the industry's common wisdom insisted the average reader was between eight and thirteen. Common wisdom also said that someone would read comics for about five years, then as they hit junior high (middle school for some) or high school, they would move onto different forms of literature. For many, that common wisdom was correct.

But that meant the stories were always written for the younger audience, and plots would be recycled because five to six years later there would be an entirely new crop of readers who had never seen those stories before.

I've been a comics fan since I was about six years old. I grew up with DC, Archie, Harvey, ACG and on very, very rare occasions, Charlton Comics. I did not grow up on Marvel Comics.

But there was a very good reason I didn't.

There were no Marvel comics when I started reading comics. There were Atlas comics, Marvel's predecessor, but those were usually big monster comics or Westerns or teenage girl model comics, or other things I wasn't interested in. But no Marvel comics. And certainly no Marvel super-hero comics.

In the mid-to-late-1950s, just as I was starting to get old enough to get bored with comics written for 8-to-12-year-olds, DC editor Julie Schwartz revived DC's super hero comics while aiming them at a slightly older readership, probably 13-16 year olds. His books kept me a confirmed comics fan.

I was still young but I was closing in on that upper-age group. I was also an avid reader of non-comics, so I was looking for something that would challenge my teenage self and beyond.

The first comic that fit that was *Amazing Adult Fantasy* #7, cover dated December 1961. I think the word "Adult" caught my attention. Even though I was still a few years away from actually being an adult, what teenage person didn't think they already were one? *Amazing Adult Fantasy* was a *Twilight Zone*-ish horror/mystery/O'Henry surprise-ending comic written by Stan Lee and drawn by Steve Ditko. And for the first time I felt the comic book stories I was reading were not necessarily meant for the 8-to-12-year-old I no longer was.

So I looked to see what else that company was publishing. And that turned out to be a brand-new comic, cover dated November 1961, called *The Fantastic Four*.

Truth time: I almost didn't buy *The Fantastic Four*. The cartoony logo looked like it should have been on an Archie Comic, not a realistic super hero comic. When I did buy and read it, the heroes actually argued with each other. Heroes didn't argue with each other. I certainly knew that. Also, the four members of the FF didn't wear costumes. And one was a monster. And heroes weren't monsters. And they always had costumes. Finally, the leader called himself Mr. Fantastic. How stupid/vain was that?

The book seemed crude. But as I read it, it was actually funny at times. I recognized the artist as the same (uncredited) guy who used to draw DC's *Challengers of the Unknown* and also my absolute favorite run of Green Arrow stories. And the writer, Stan Lee, was the same guy who wrote those wonderful *Amazing Adult Fantasy* stories I loved.

So I decided to give the book a chance.

And I was really glad I did.

These comics were not aimed at 8-to-12-year-old kids, or even young teens. They were being aimed at the age I was right then, 15-18, and older. They approached comics differently than I had seen before. They introduced one mind-boggling concept after the other: Stan and Jack brought us hundreds of incredible new characters, incredible new ideas.

If you got into comics later on you can't possibly know how utterly original all this was. Everything that is still being done today derives from those books, and I think it's safe to say no other comic, before or since, has ever introduced so many brilliant new characters and ideas in such rapid succession as *The Fantastic Four*.

And I loved them.

Time jump: I got into writing comics and, because of editor Roy Thomas, I soon found myself invited to join the Marvel Bullpen.

Another time jump: I was writing books like *Tomb of Dracula* and *Werewolf by Night*, and even *Daredevil*, but then editor Archie Goodwin asked me to take over writing *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *The Fantastic Four*. The two books that kept me in comics. The two books that I absolutely loved reading. Talk about your every dream come true.

This collection begins a few issues before I started writing the FF. Len Wein and George Pérez were closing out their tenure with the aid of Bill Mantlo and a few others and new FF artist Keith Pollard had just made his debut. When I took over the book with *Fantastic Four* #195, the FF had been split up. In my mind that had happened all too often. I wanted the FF to be about those four people: Reed, Sue, Ben and Johnny. Together. The first time the team split up it made for a nice change of pace that didn't need to be repeated. But it was. So my goal was to bring the FF together again, and though I knew future writers would do whatever they felt they needed to, I wanted to say the Fantastic Four was not a team, but a family, and because of that they would never break up again.

FF #195 began with Sue Storm, in Hollywood, trying to call Reed but not getting through to him. At the same time, Reed had tried to get through to Sue, and failed, too. Remember, this was done before smart phones and voice messaging. If our current phone system existed then the drama would be over by page three. Thank goodness that didn't happen.

But as I say, I wanted each character to come to the realization that the FF belonged together. For Sue it meant only one person could guest star in the issue: Someone who had been in love with Sue since way back in *FF* #4. The Savage Sub-Mariner.

Of course one doesn't just do a love story. Sue has to come to grips with her love for Reed, Namor has to understand that he belongs in Atlantis. So this becomes a story where both characters need to figure out what they truly want.

When the FF broke up, Reed, who had also lost his stretching powers, went to work for a laboratory. Ever so slowly he begins to discover he's been set up by some unknown enemy. This issue opens with Reed being held in stasis. Our baddie is trying to take control by breaking Reed's will and forcing him to obey his commands.

Ben, Sue and Johnny are in Hollywood and that leads to a lot of humor, especially when they walk down the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Tourists see Ben and think he's one of the cosplayers who dress up as celebrities to get you to pay them for a photo. Yes, that existed as far back as 1978. Nothing is new, people.

Also, despite the fact that Sue, Ben and Johnny are three members of a very famous super-hero team, all the snooty waiters in Hollywood just assume they are different movie stars.

That mistaken identity bit was not used just for humor, but served as foreshadowing: *Nothing is as it seems to be.* Which is very true, especially when we learn the true identity of our villain, the Invincible Man.

With issue #197 I start to move the book into high gear. Making it even better, Joe Sinnott returned as inker/finisher. To say it was a thrill to work with Joe on the FF is an understatement. His work with Jack Kirby was one of the reasons the book was my absolute favorite growing up.

A mysterious person who we'd hinted at over the past few issues lets Reed know he can give him back his powers. Reed checks the man's calculations, determines they will work, and takes a shuttle into space. Meanwhile, we learn the mysterious benefactor is actually working for Doctor Doom.

I don't want to say too much here because I had a second goal in mind when I took over the book. First was bringing the FF back together again. Second was doing a major Doctor Doom storyline which was laser focused on Doom's long-time feud with Reed. I wanted the big Doom/Reed battle to be the biggest, most important battle ever. And I was planning it for issue #200, just a few short months away.

Along the way Reed battles the Red Ghost who is working with Doom. By the end of this issue, we see Reed, angrier than we'd ever seen him, and he promises to end Doctor Doom as a threat once and for all.

How is that for whetting the reader's appetite?

Issue #198 is called "Invasion!" And it is. We watch a furious Reed Richards launch a one-man invasion of Latveria using all his new, enhanced abilities to get closer and closer to Doom.

At the same time, Doom has kidnapped Alicia Masters, Ben's blind girlfriend, and a brilliant sculptress, to create a powerful sculpture of him. This is assumed to be because Doom has a massive ego, but it will later turn out to be something much more insidious.

We also meet the Latverian underground and their leader, Zorba, who is outfitted with a partial face prosthetic. The leader of the underground and the enemy they are fighting both share deformities, but we're trying to show they don't change who a person is. Where Doom uses his deformity as an excuse to be evil, Zorba, his face damaged, too, fights for freedom. The pretense Doom has used all these years is stripped away.

This issue also harkens back to some of the classic Lee/Kirby issues where they show how Doom treated the people of Latveria. I tried to follow Stan's lead there and hope I did it well, but you will have to decide that for yourselves.

Finally, we meet — Doctor Doom's son.

Yeah. I thought that would get you to read the next issue, too.

Issue #199 is suitably called "The Son of Doctor Doom!" Everything comes into place for the big culmination next issue. I've always believed in story structure and the Doom story was structured just the way I wanted. And that's why it's my favorite of all my FF work.

Issue #200. This is the big one. Not only because it's the FF's 200th issue. Not just because it also happens to be their 17th anniversary, but because it literally is a double-sized book.

I'm not going to talk about the story except to say that something was set up a few months back that comes into play here. What I believe in doing is making something seem like it's intended only for one thing but it turns out it is actually there for a completely different reason. As you read over my issues see if you can figure out what I'm talking about.

I do want to mention that back in 1978 nobody ever did books with double the pages at twice the price. Those larger books were reserved for Annuals only. But I wanted to make the FF's 200th issue into something special and for months I lobbied for a double-sized book.

The powers that be back then thought if we charged twice the normal price we would lose sales. But I kept pushing until they finally relented, probably just to shut me up. *FF* #200 is double-sized and double-priced and it turned out that we sold even more copies than we ever had before. Needless to say, a year later when I asked for the same double-sized treatment for *The Amazing Spider-Man* #200, nobody said boo.

Anyway, this is my absolute favorite FF issue. Hope you like it, too.

FF #201 finally has the group saying they are a family and they will never split up again. (Or at least until the next creative team decides otherwise.) This is the culmination of what I wanted to do with the book from day one. The FF get back to the Baxter Building and rebuild it, only to have it turn against them. It's a good, solid idea, and one I repeated many years later in *The New Teen Titans* where I had Titans Tower attack our heroes. Both stories are very different but the underlying premise is pretty much the same. As a one-shot story it's not earth-shaking, but I thought it worked well coming after such a powerful multi-parter as the Doom story.

FF #202 guest stars Iron Man, both as an enemy and as a friend. It also features Quasimodo, a Lee/Kirby character I always loved. *FF* #203 is very emotional and very different, but I literally don't remember anything about it. There is phrasing and dialog that I obviously wrote, but that's it. I will say I really enjoyed experiencing it as a reader. Maybe because I'm not remembering the parts I wished I had done better.

Fantastic Four Annual #12 is one weird book. Again, I barely remember it, but for reasons I certainly don't recall, there's a guest appearance by Chuck Barris of *The Gong Show*, along with Arte Johnson, Jaye P. Morgan and Jamie Farr. Fortunately, I enjoyed the absurdity of *The Gong Show*, which was a talent show for people who didn't have any talent. As proof, the winner of *The Gong Show* in this issue was "Annabelle and Her Singing Appendix." Trust me, if you ever saw *The Gong Show*, that's not as ridiculous an example as you'd think.

But the main giveaway that I wrote it comes in the second half of the story as it features one of my absolute favorite villain creations. I won't say who it is, but I created him for *The Man Called Nova* and even today I think he's a great character.

Fantastic Four Annual #13 was written by Bill Mantlo, with art by Sal Buscema and Joe Sinnott. It guest stars Daredevil and pits our heroes against the Mole Man and his mindless minions. It's an interesting story about truth and beauty it puts a wonderful spin on Mole Man.

I have to admit, prior to re-reading all my issues, if you asked me about my FF run, I would say with the exception of the Doctor Doom storyline, culminating in #200, that I never quite achieved what I wanted. Stan and Jack set such a high bar with their first 100-plus issues that I thought I fell way short.

I still think my run is nowhere near as good as theirs, but it's not quite as off as I remembered. I can certainly see I had a strong viewpoint as to what an FF story should be, at least for the 1970s. And I did the best I could.

Fortunately, I was backed up by Keith Pollard who was just wonderful to work with and whose art honored Jack's spirit. I think because Keith left comics before he ever got the chance to do his own original series that he may not be remembered for being as good as he actually was, but in my mind Keith was great.

Hope you enjoy these stories. They are a definite trip down memory lane, and on a few occasions, a detour.

Marv Wolfman
Jan. 26, 2016

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
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FANTASTIC FOUR®
WHAT STARTS AS A CAR RACE TURNS INTO HOLOCAUST-- LO, THE SCREAMING WIND!
THE TORCH FIGHTS ALONE AGAINST THE MOST SURPRISING SUPER-VILLAIN OF ALL!
PEREZ & GIACOIA

A brilliant scientist— his best friend— the woman he loves— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human!
MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! Now they are the FANTASTIC FOUR— and the world will never be the same again!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

ROGER SLIFER GUEST SCRIPTER * LEN WEIN PLOTTER * GEORGE PEREZ & JOE SINNOTT ARTISTS / STORYTELLERS * GLYNIS WEIN COLORIST * JOE ROSEN LETTERER * MARV WOLFMAN EDITOR

HE WHO SOWETH THE WIND...!

TWO ISSUES AGO, WE WITNESSED THE **DEATH** OF A LEGEND, THE **DISBANDING** OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR! NOW, ONE OF THE FORMER MEMBERS OF THAT TEAM HAS JUST STEPPED OFF A WESTBOUND PLANE TO BEGIN HIS LIFE **ANEW.**

AND HIS DOWNCAST EYES SEE NOTHING BUT IMAGES OF **PAST GLORIES** AS HE CONTEMPLATES HIS **NEW BEGINNING.**

MAYBE DRIVING IN THIS CROSS-COUNTRY RACE WASN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA IN THE **FIRST** PLACE--!

I'M **ALONE** OUT HERE... NO **FRIENDS** TO TALK TO, NOT EVEN BEN TO BICKER WITH.

HE'S SO **CUTE!**

YET HE APPEARS SO... **ORDINARY!**

OBOYOBOYO-BOY**OBOY!**

AROUND THE GLOBE, THIS YOUNG MAN IS KNOWN TO **MILLIONS** AS THE **HUMAN TORCH!**

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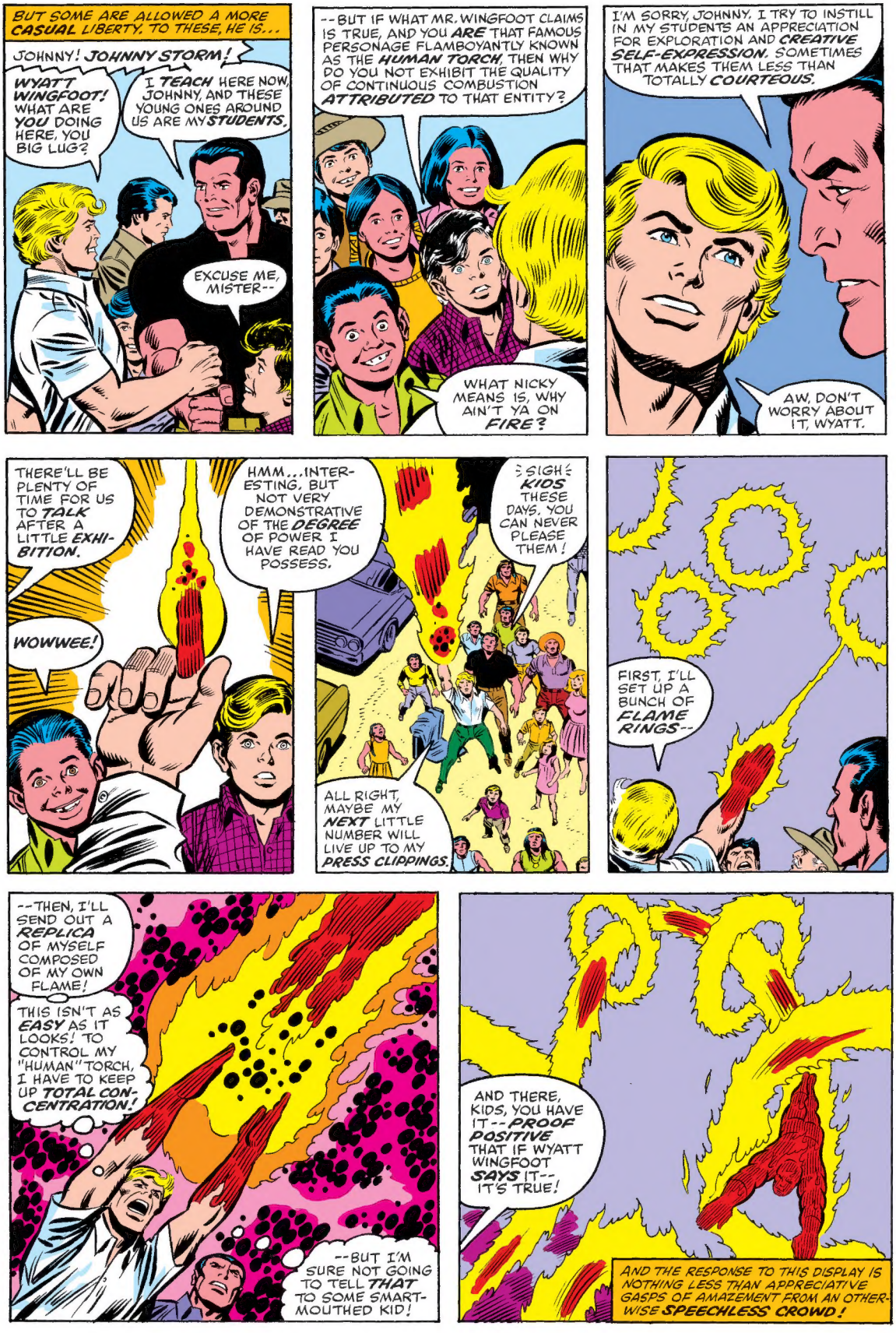
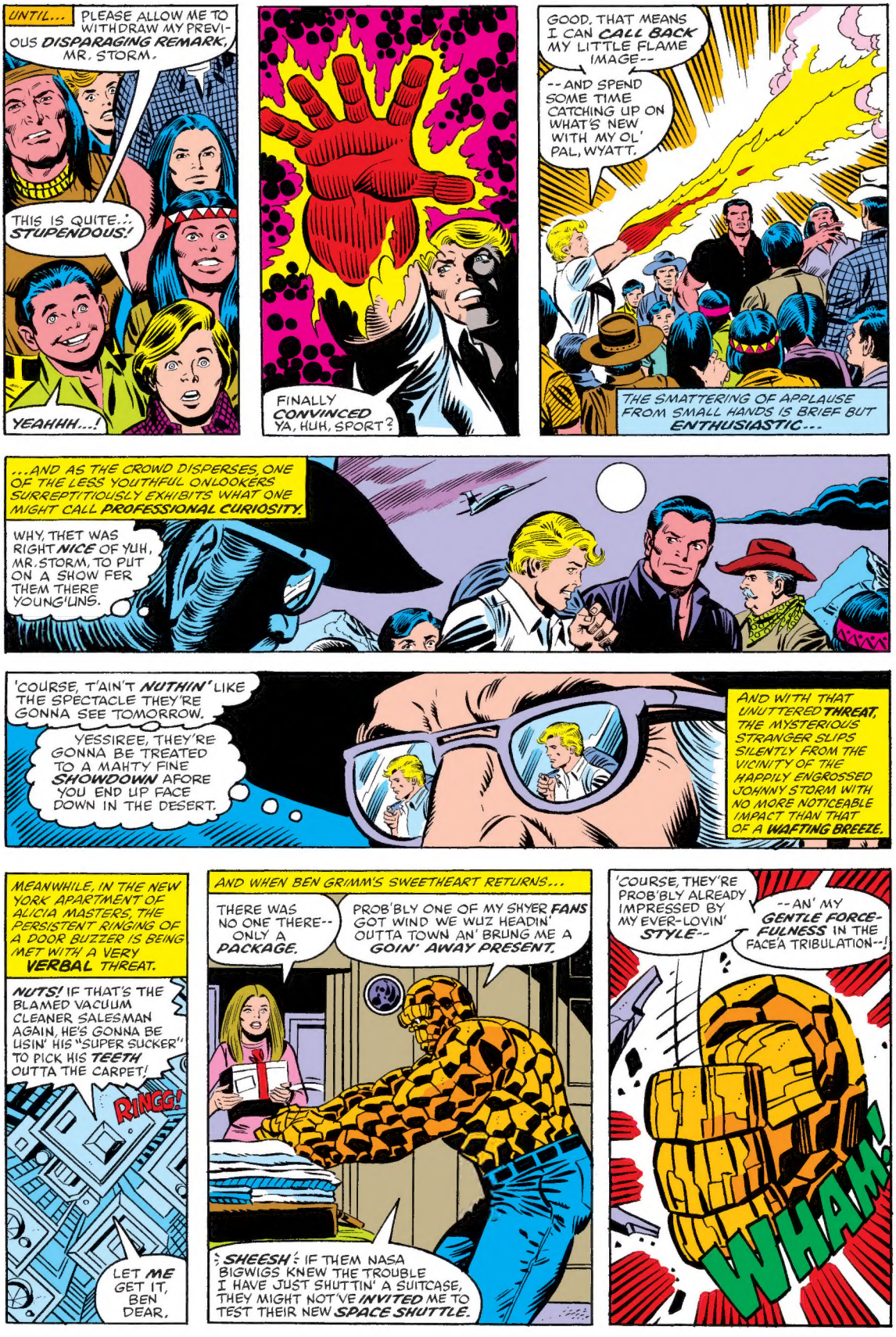
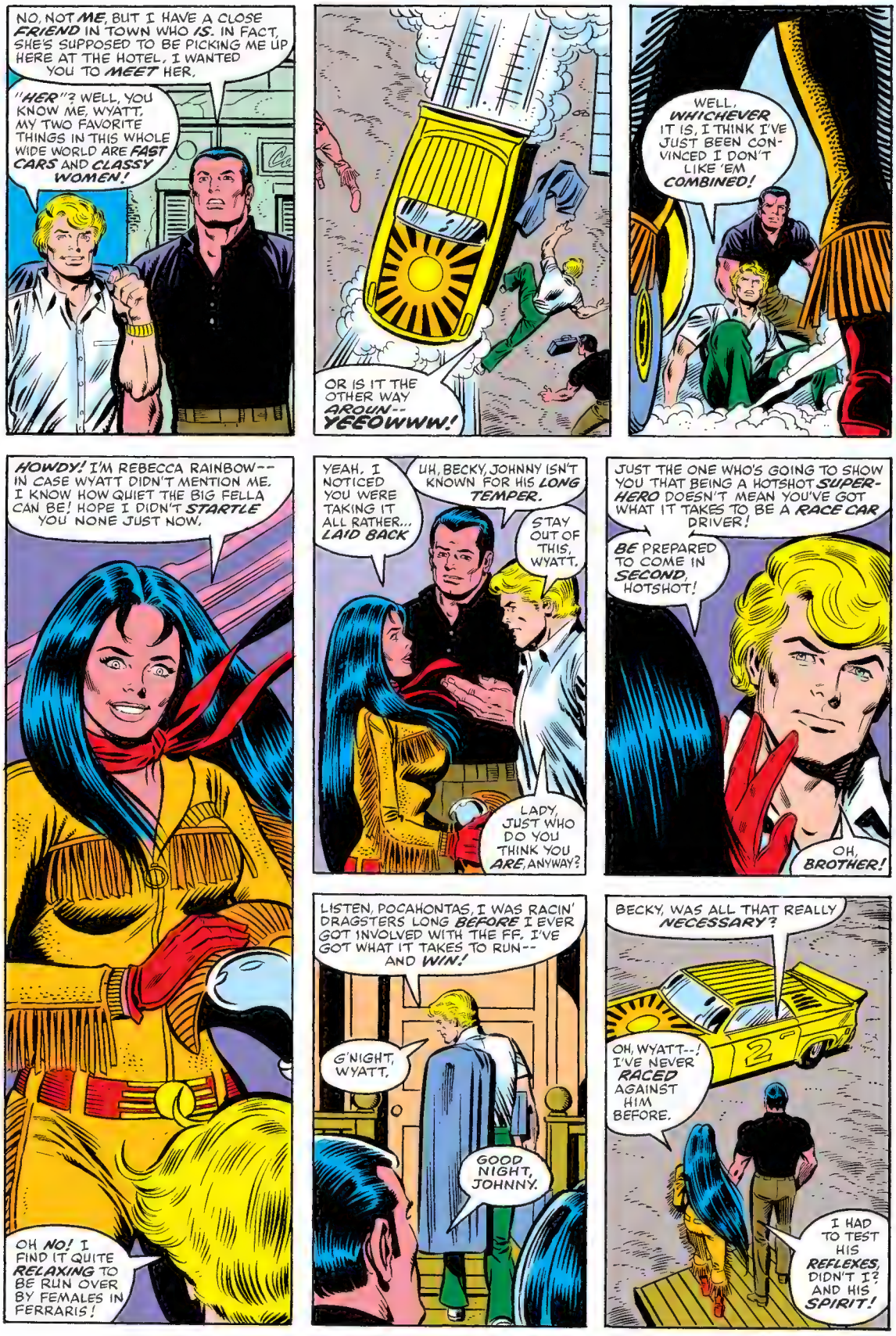
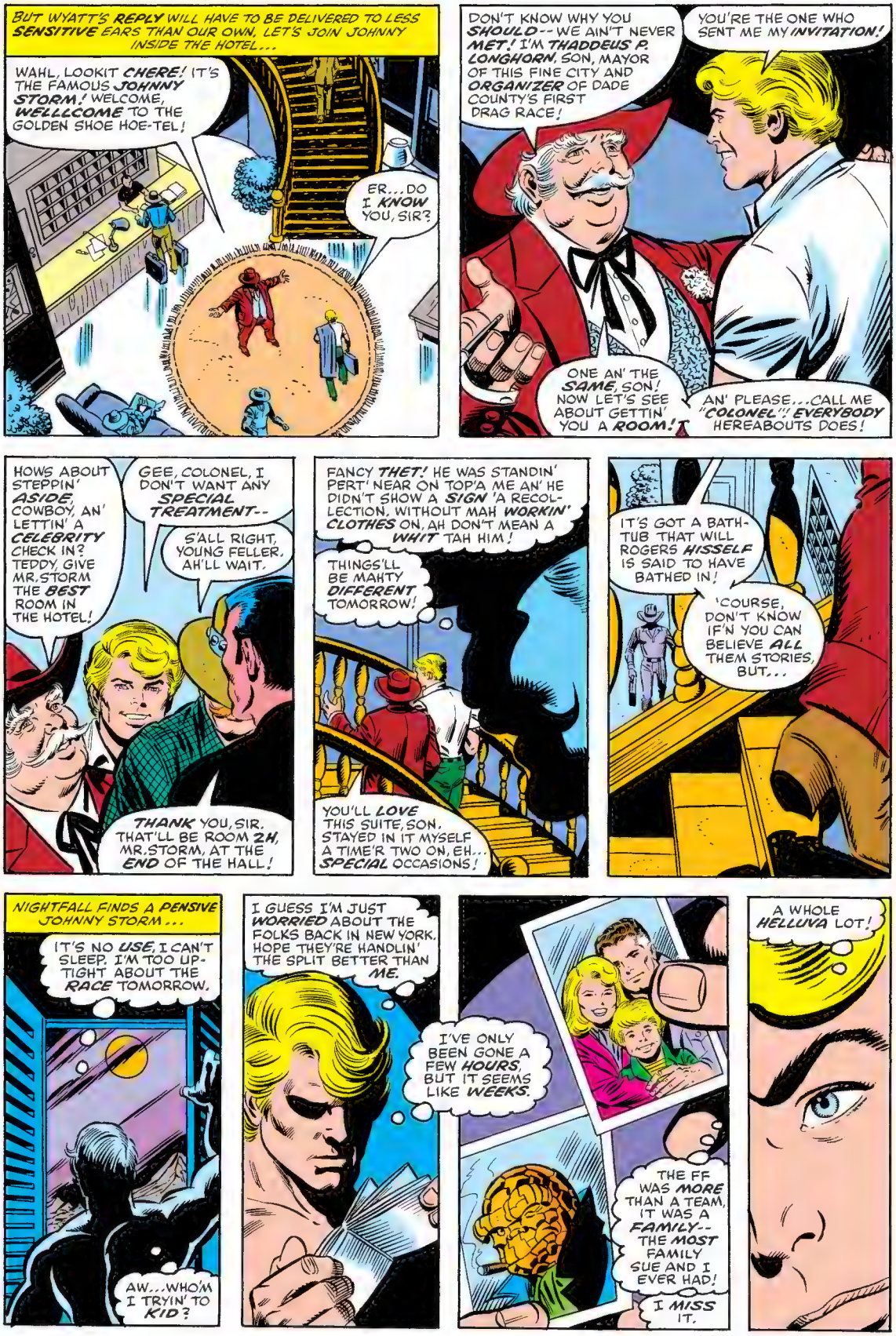
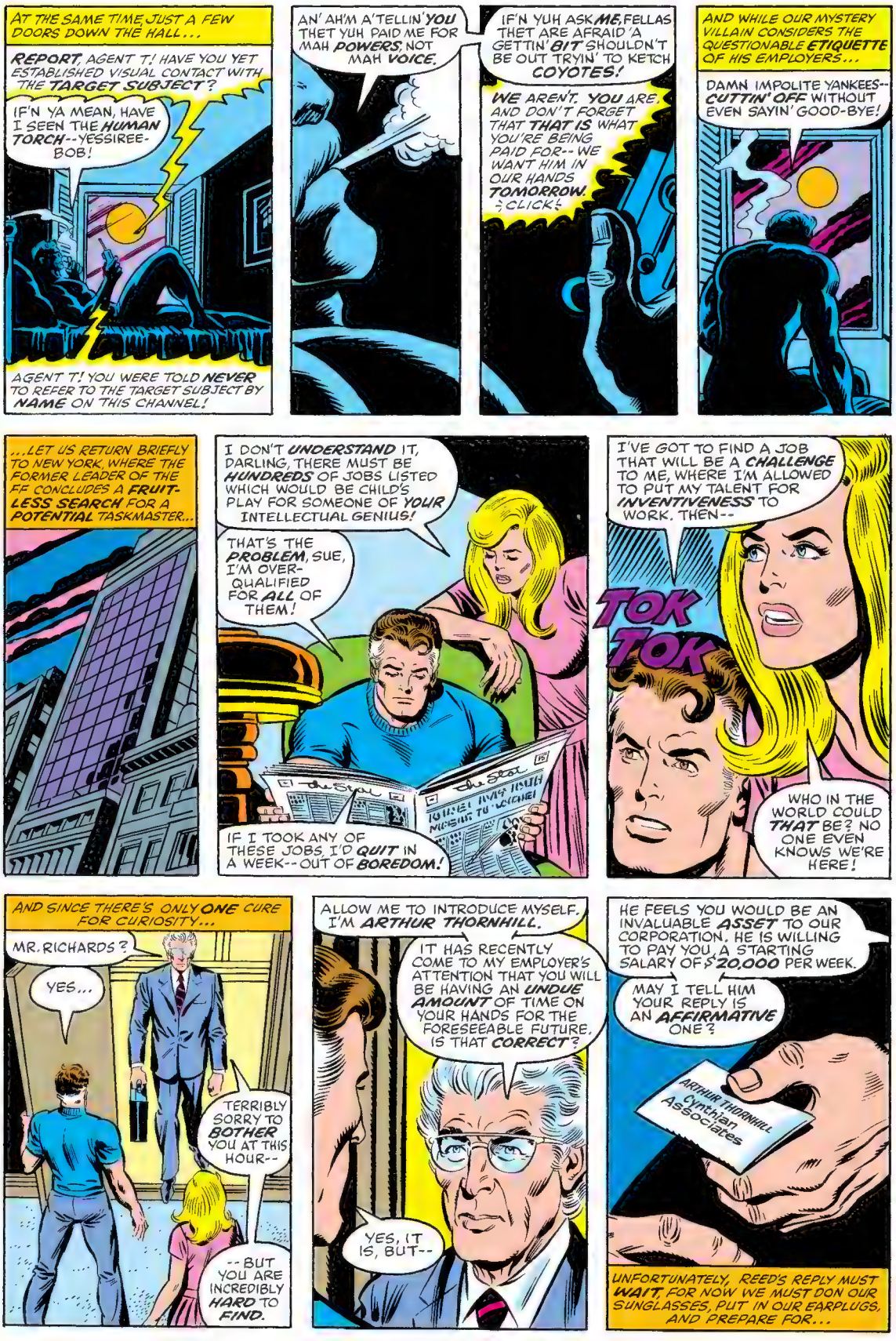

BUT SOME ARE ALLOWED A MORE CASUAL LIBERTY. TO THESE, HE IS...
JOHNNY! JOHNNY STORM!
WYATT WINGFOOT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, YOU BIG LUG?
I TEACH HERE NOW, JOHNNY, AND THESE YOUNG ONES AROUND US ARE MY STUDENTS.
EXCUSE ME, MISTER--
--BUT IF WHAT MR. WINGFOOT CLAIMS IS TRUE, AND YOU ARE THAT FAMOUS PERSONAGE FLAMBOYANTLY KNOWN AS THE HUMAN TORCH, THEN WHY DO YOU NOT EXHIBIT THE QUALITY OF CONTINUOUS COMBUSTION ATTRIBUTED TO THAT ENTITY?
WHAT NICKY MEANS IS, WHY AIN'T YA ON FIRE?
I'M SORRY, JOHNNY. I TRY TO INSTILL IN MY STUDENTS AN APPRECIATION FOR EXPLORATION AND CREATIVE SELF-EXPRESSION. SOMETIMES THAT MAKES THEM LESS THAN TOTALLY COURTEOUS.
AW, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, WYATT.
THERE'LL BE PLENTY OF TIME FOR US TO TALK AFTER A LITTLE EXHIBITION.
WOWWEE!
HMM...INTERESTING, BUT NOT VERY DEMONSTRATIVE OF THE DEGREE OF POWER I HAVE READ YOU POSSESS.
:SIGH: KIDS THESE DAYS, YOU CAN NEVER PLEASE THEM!
ALL RIGHT, MAYBE MY NEXT LITTLE NUMBER WILL LIVE UP TO MY PRESS CLIPPINGS.
FIRST, I'LL SET UP A BUNCH OF FLAME RINGS--
--THEN, I'LL SEND OUT A REPLICA OF MYSELF COMPOSED OF MY OWN FLAME!
THIS ISN'T AS EASY AS IT LOOKS! TO CONTROL MY "HUMAN" TORCH, I HAVE TO KEEP UP TOTAL CONCENTRATION!
--BUT I'M SURE NOT GOING TO TELL THAT TO SOME SMART-MOUTHED KID!
AND THERE, KIDS, YOU HAVE IT--PROOF POSITIVE THAT IF WYATT WINGFOOT SAYS IT--IT'S TRUE!
AND THE RESPONSE TO THIS DISPLAY IS NOTHING LESS THAN APPRECIATIVE GASPS OF AMAZEMENT FROM AN OTHERWISE SPEECHLESS CROWD!

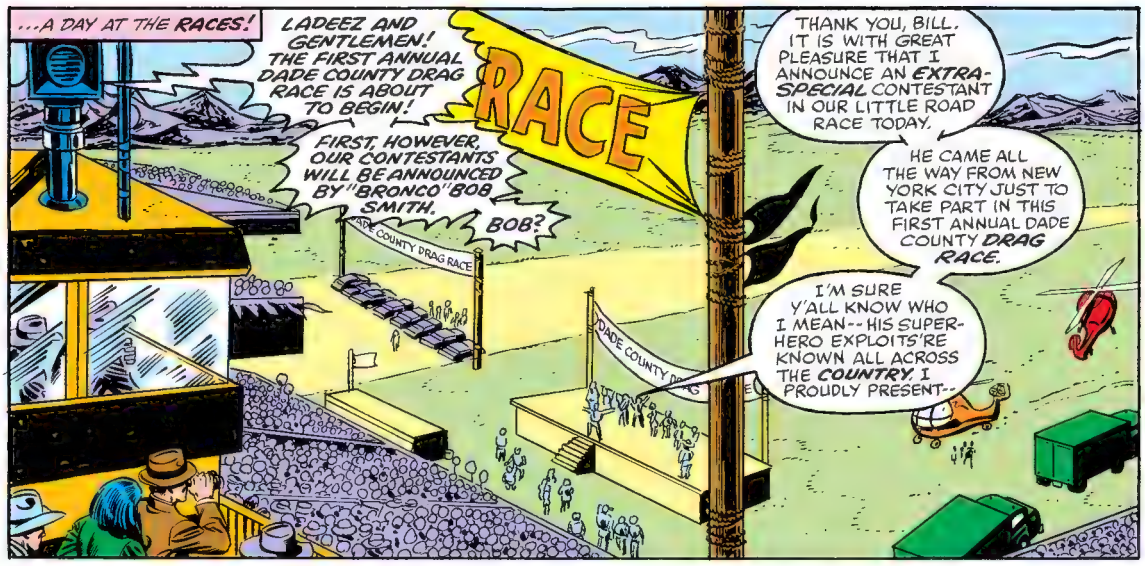

UNTIL...
PLEASE ALLOW ME TO WITHDRAW MY PREVIOUS DISPARAGING REMARK, MR. STORM.
THIS IS QUITE...: STUPENDOUS!
YEAHHH...!
FINALLY CONVINCED YA, HUH, SPORT?
GOOD, THAT MEANS I CAN CALL BACK MY LITTLE FLAME IMAGE--
--AND SPEND SOME TIME CATCHING UP ON WHAT'S NEW WITH MY OL' PAL, WYATT.
THE SMATTERING OF APPLAUSE FROM SMALL HANDS IS BRIEF BUT ENTHUSIASTIC...
...AND AS THE CROWD DISPERSES, ONE OF THE LESS YOUTHFUL ONLOOKERS SURREPTITIOUSLY EXHIBITS WHAT ONE MIGHT CALL PROFESSIONAL CURIOSITY.
WHY, THET WAS RIGHT NICE OF YUH, MR. STORM, TO PUT ON A SHOW FER THEM THERE YOUNG'UNS.
'COURSE, T'AIN'T NUTHIN' LIKE THE SPECTACLE THEY'RE GONNA SEE TOMORROW.
YESSIREE, THEY'RE GONNA BE TREATED TO A MAHTY FINE SHOWDOWN AFORE YOU END UP FACE DOWN IN THE DESERT.
AND WITH THAT UNUTTERED THREAT, THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER SLIPS SILENTLY FROM THE VICINITY OF THE HAPPILY ENGROSSED JOHNNY STORM WITH NO MORE NOTICEABLE IMPACT THAN THAT OF A WAFTING BREEZE.
MEANWHILE, IN THE NEW YORK APARTMENT OF ALICIA MASTERS, THE PERSISTENT RINGING OF A DOOR BUZZER IS BEING MET WITH A VERY VERBAL THREAT.
NUTS! IF THAT'S THE BLAMED VACUUM CLEANER SALESMAN AGAIN, HE'S GONNA BE USIN' HIS "SUPER SUCKER" TO PICK HIS TEETH OUTTA THE CARPET!
RINGG!
LET ME GET IT, BEN DEAR.
AND WHEN BEN GRIMM'S SWEETHEART RETURNS...
THERE WAS NO ONE THERE-- ONLY A PACKAGE.
PROB'BLY ONE OF MY SHYER FANS GOT WIND WE WUZ HEADIN' OUTTA TOWN AN' BRUNG ME A GOIN' AWAY PRESENT.
SHEESH! IF THEM NASA BIGWIGS KNEW THE TROUBLE I HAVE JUST SHUTTIN' A SUITCASE, THEY MIGHT NOT'VE INVITED ME TO TEST THEIR NEW SPACE SHUTTLE.
'COURSE, THEY'RE PROB'BLY ALREADY IMPRESSED BY MY EVER-LOVIN' STYLE--
--AN' MY GENTLE FORCE-FULNESS IN THE FACE'A TRIBULATION--!
WHAM!

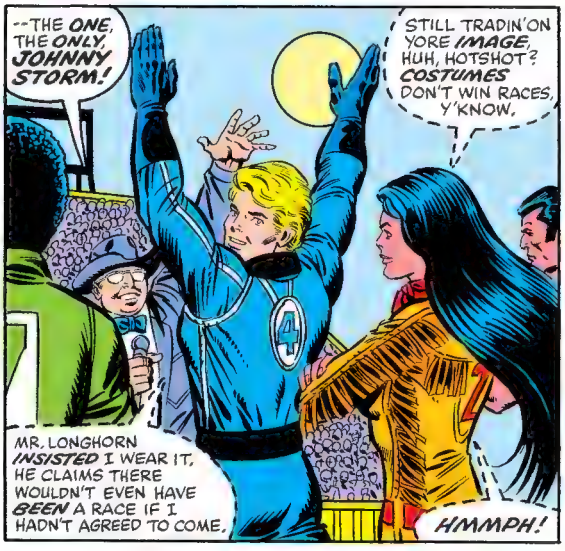
UHN...BABE, I DON'T KNOW HOW TA BREAK THIS TO YA, BUT... YA KNOW THAT ANTIQUE BED YER MOTHER GAVE YA THAT HER MOTHER GAVE HER?
WELL, I DON'T THINK YER LATER GENERATIONS ARE GONNA GET MUCH USE OUTTA IT.
NEVER MIND, BEN, I BELIEVE THIS PACKAGE IS MORE IMPORTANT, RIGHT NOW.
IT SOUNDS LIKE IT'S TICKING!
TICKING?!?
TO: B.J. GRIMM c/o ALICIA MASTERS
GIMME THAT!!
--AN' GET BEHIND ME!
THE FF'S GOT A HUNNERT ENEMIES-- ANY ONE'A WHICH MIGHT BE SPECIAL-DELIVERIN' US A TIME--
--PIECE?!?
ALL P'OINT ASIDE WE'RE ALL GONNA MISS YA, YA BIG APE! - THE GANG
EXCUSE ME, BEN DEAR, BUT DID YOU SAY SOME-ONE SENT YOU A WATCH?
NOT SOMEBODY, BABE, IT'S THEM BLAMED YANCY STREETERS! THEM BOZOS AIN'T GAVE ME A MINNUT'S PEACE SINCE THE FF WUZ FORMED! I BET THEY KNEW I'D DUNK IT INNA SINK!
I HATE TA SAY IT, BUT I THINK I'M EVEN GONNA MISS THEM YAHOOS.
MEANWHILE, (AND WE REFRAIN FROM SAYING "BACK AT THE RANCH")...
...SO AFTER GRADUATION, JOHNNY, I DECIDED MY EDUCATION COULD BEST BE PUT TO USE TEACHING THE YOUNG ONES OF THE KEEWAZI.
OF COURSE! I HAD FORGOTTEN YOUR TRIBE IS IN THIS AREA.
BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW TO MEET ME AT THE AIRPORT?
EVEN I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT FLIGHT I WAS TAKING TILL THIS MORNING.
YES, BUT THE OTHER CON-TESTANTS WERE AWARE OF YOUR TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS AS SOON AS YOU ACCEPTED THE INVITATION TO RACE.
OTHER...? DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE TAKING PART IN THE RACE!?

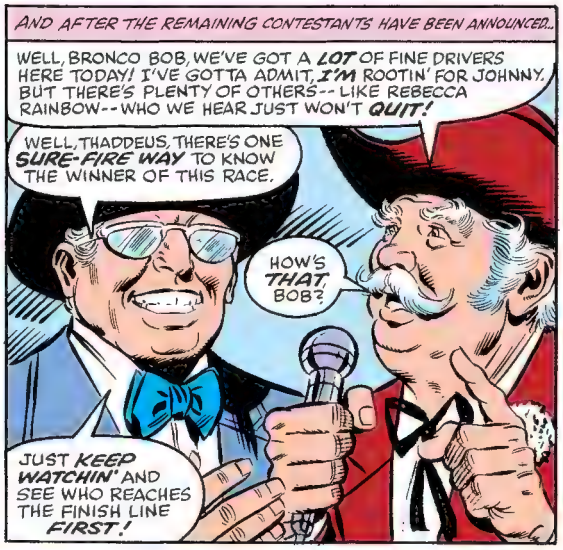

NO, NOT ME, BUT I HAVE A CLOSE FRIEND IN TOWN WHO IS. IN FACT, SHE'S SUPPOSED TO BE PICKING ME UP HERE AT THE HOTEL. I WANTED YOU TO MEET HER.
"HER"? WELL, YOU KNOW ME, WYATT. MY TWO FAVORITE THINGS IN THIS WHOLE WIDE WORLD ARE FAST CARS AND CLASSY WOMEN!
OR IS IT THE OTHER WAY AROUN-- YEEOWWW!
WELL, WHICHEVER IT IS, I THINK I'VE JUST BEEN CONVINCED I DON'T LIKE 'EM COMBINED!
HOWDY! I'M REBECCA RAINBOW-- IN CASE WYATT DIDN'T MENTION ME. I KNOW HOW QUIET THE BIG FELLA CAN BE! HOPE I DIDN'T STARTLE YOU NONE JUST NOW.
OH NO! I FIND IT QUITE RELAXING TO BE RUN OVER BY FEMALES IN FERRARIS!
YEAH, I NOTICED YOU WERE TAKING IT ALL RATHER... LAID BACK
UH, BECKY, JOHNNY ISN'T KNOWN FOR HIS LONG TEMPER.
STAY OUT OF THIS, WYATT.
LADY, JUST WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE, ANYWAY?
JUST THE ONE WHO'S GOING TO SHOW YOU THAT BEING A HOTSHOT SUPER-HERO DOESN'T MEAN YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A RACE CAR DRIVER!
BE PREPARED TO COME IN SECOND, HOTSHOT!
OH, BROTHER!
LISTEN, POCAHONTAS, I WAS RACIN' DRAGSTERS LONG BEFORE I EVER GOT INVOLVED WITH THE FF. I'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO RUN-- AND WIN!
G'NIGHT, WYATT.
GOOD NIGHT, JOHNNY.
BECKY, WAS ALL THAT REALLY NECESSARY?
OH, WYATT--! I'VE NEVER RACED AGAINST HIM BEFORE.
I HAD TO TEST HIS REFLEXES, DIDN'T I? AND HIS SPIRIT!

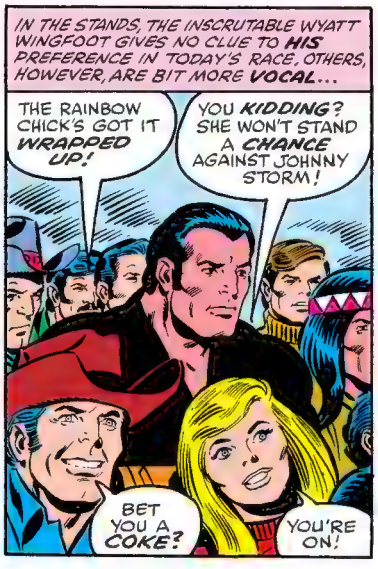

BUT WYATT'S REPLY WILL HAVE TO BE DELIVERED TO LESS SENSITIVE EARS THAN OUR OWN. LET'S JOIN JOHNNY INSIDE THE HOTEL...
WAHL, LOOKIT CHERE! IT'S THE FAMOUS JOHNNY STORM! WELCOME, WELLLCOME TO THE GOLDEN SHOE HOE-TEL!
ER...DO I KNOW YOU, SIR?
DON'T KNOW WHY YOU SHOULD--WE AIN'T NEVER MET! I'M THADDEUS P. LONGHORN, SON, MAYOR OF THIS FINE CITY AND ORGANIZER OF DADE COUNTY'S FIRST DRAG RACE!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SENT ME MY INVITATION!
ONE AN' THE SAME, SON! NOW LET'S SEE ABOUT GETTIN' YOU A ROOM!
AN' PLEASE...CALL ME "COLONEL"! EVERYBODY HEREABOUTS DOES!
HOWS ABOUT STEPPIN' ASIDE, COWBOY, AN' LETTIN' A CELEBRITY CHECK IN? TEDDY, GIVE MR. STORM THE BEST ROOM IN THE HOTEL!
GEE, COLONEL, I DON'T WANT ANY SPECIAL TREATMENT--
S'ALL RIGHT, YOUNG FELLER. AH'LL WAIT.
THANK YOU, SIR. THAT'LL BE ROOM 2H, MR. STORM, AT THE END OF THE HALL!
FANCY THET! HE WAS STANDIN' PERT' NEAR ON TOP'A ME AN' HE DIDN'T SHOW A SIGN 'A RECOLLECTION. WITHOUT MAH WORKIN' CLOTHES ON, AH DON'T MEAN A WHIT TAH HIM!
THINGS'LL BE MAHTY DIFFERENT TOMORROW!
YOU'LL LOVE THIS SUITE, SON. STAYED IN IT MYSELF A TIME'R TWO ON, EH... SPECIAL OCCASIONS!
IT'S GOT A BATHTUB THAT WILL ROGERS HISSELF IS SAID TO HAVE BATHED IN!
'COURSE, DON'T KNOW IF'N YOU CAN BELIEVE ALL THEM STORIES, BUT...
NIGHTFALL FINDS A PENSIVE JOHNNY STORM...
IT'S NO USE, I CAN'T SLEEP. I'M TOO UPTIGHT ABOUT THE RACE TOMORROW.
AW...WHO'M I TRYIN' TO KID?
I GUESS I'M JUST WORRIED ABOUT THE FOLKS BACK IN NEW YORK. HOPE THEY'RE HANDLIN' THE SPLIT BETTER THAN ME.
I'VE ONLY BEEN GONE A FEW HOURS, BUT IT SEEMS LIKE WEEKS.
THE FF WAS MORE THAN A TEAM, IT WAS A FAMILY--THE MOST FAMILY SUE AND I EVER HAD!
I MISS IT.
A WHOLE HELLUVA LOT!

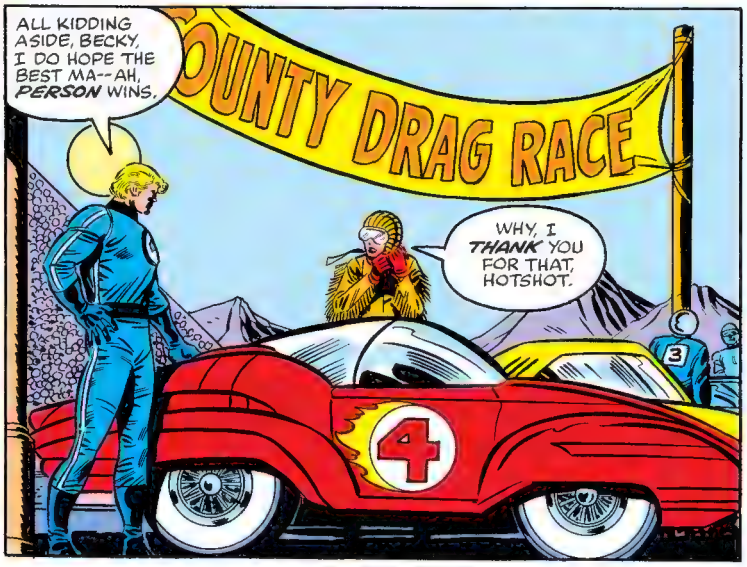

AT THE SAME TIME, JUST A FEW DOORS DOWN THE HALL...
REPORT, AGENT T! HAVE YOU YET ESTABLISHED VISUAL CONTACT WITH THE TARGET SUBJECT?
IF'N YA MEAN, HAVE I SEEN THE HUMAN TORCH--YESSIREE-BOB!
AGENT T! YOU WERE TOLD NEVER TO REFER TO THE TARGET SUBJECT BY NAME ON THIS CHANNEL!
AN' AH'M A'TELLIN' YOU THET YUH PAID ME FOR MAH POWERS, NOT MAH VOICE.
IF'N YUH ASK ME, FELLAS THET ARE AFRAID 'A GETTIN' BIT SHOULDN'T BE OUT TRYIN' TO KETCH COYOTES!
WE AREN'T. YOU ARE, AND DON'T FORGET THAT THAT IS WHAT YOU'RE BEING PAID FOR-- WE WANT HIM IN OUR HANDS TOMORROW.
-CLICK-
AND WHILE OUR MYSTERY VILLAIN CONSIDERS THE QUESTIONABLE ETIQUETTE OF HIS EMPLOYERS...
DAMN IMPOLITE YANKEES-- CUTTIN' OFF WITHOUT EVEN SAYIN' GOOD-BYE!
...LET US RETURN BRIEFLY TO NEW YORK, WHERE THE FORMER LEADER OF THE FF CONCLUDES A FRUITLESS SEARCH FOR A POTENTIAL TASKMASTER...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT, DARLING, THERE MUST BE HUNDREDS OF JOBS LISTED WHICH WOULD BE CHILD'S PLAY FOR SOMEONE OF YOUR INTELLECTUAL GENIUS!
THAT'S THE PROBLEM, SUE, I'M OVER-QUALIFIED FOR ALL OF THEM!
IF I TOOK ANY OF THESE JOBS, I'D QUIT IN A WEEK-- OUT OF BOREDOM!
I'VE GOT TO FIND A JOB THAT WILL BE A CHALLENGE TO ME, WHERE I'M ALLOWED TO PUT MY TALENT FOR INVENTIVENESS TO WORK. THEN--
TOK TOK
WHO IN THE WORLD COULD THAT BE? NO ONE EVEN KNOWS WE'RE HERE!
AND SINCE THERE'S ONLY ONE CURE FOR CURIOSITY...
MR. RICHARDS?
YES...
TERRIBLY SORRY TO BOTHER YOU AT THIS HOUR--
--BUT YOU ARE INCREDIBLY HARD TO FIND.
ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. I'M ARTHUR THORNHILL.
IT HAS RECENTLY COME TO MY EMPLOYER'S ATTENTION THAT YOU WILL BE HAVING AN UNDUE AMOUNT OF TIME ON YOUR HANDS FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. IS THAT CORRECT?
YES, IT IS, BUT--
HE FEELS YOU WOULD BE AN INVALUABLE ASSET TO OUR CORPORATION. HE IS WILLING TO PAY YOU A STARTING SALARY OF $20,000 PER WEEK.
MAY I TELL HIM YOUR REPLY IS AN AFFIRMATIVE ONE?
ARTHUR THORNHILL Cynthian Associates
UNFORTUNATELY, REED'S REPLY MUST WAIT, FOR NOW WE MUST DON OUR SUNGLASSES, PUT IN OUR EARPLUGS, AND PREPARE FOR...

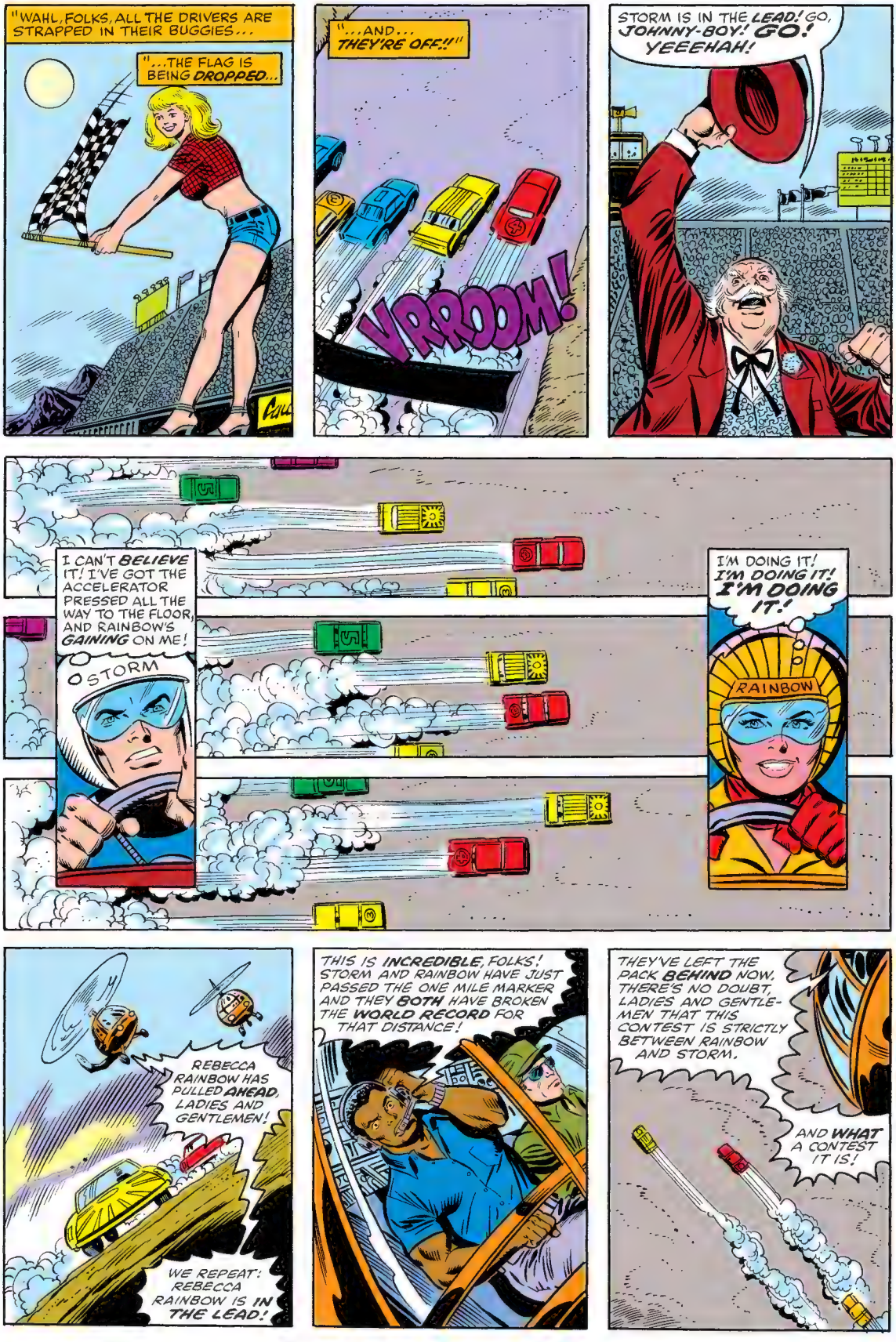

...A DAY AT THE RACES!
LADEEZ AND GENTLEMEN! THE FIRST ANNUAL DADE COUNTY DRAG RACE IS ABOUT TO BEGIN!
RACE
FIRST, HOWEVER, OUR CONTESTANTS WILL BE ANNOUNCED BY "BRONCO" BOB SMITH.
BOB?
DADE COUNTY DRAG RACE
THANK YOU, BILL. IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE THAT I ANNOUNCE AN EXTRA-SPECIAL CONTESTANT IN OUR LITTLE ROAD RACE TODAY.
HE CAME ALL THE WAY FROM NEW YORK CITY JUST TO TAKE PART IN THIS FIRST ANNUAL DADE COUNTY DRAG RACE.
I'M SURE Y'ALL KNOW WHO I MEAN--HIS SUPER-HERO EXPLOITS'RE KNOWN ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY. I PROUDLY PRESENT--

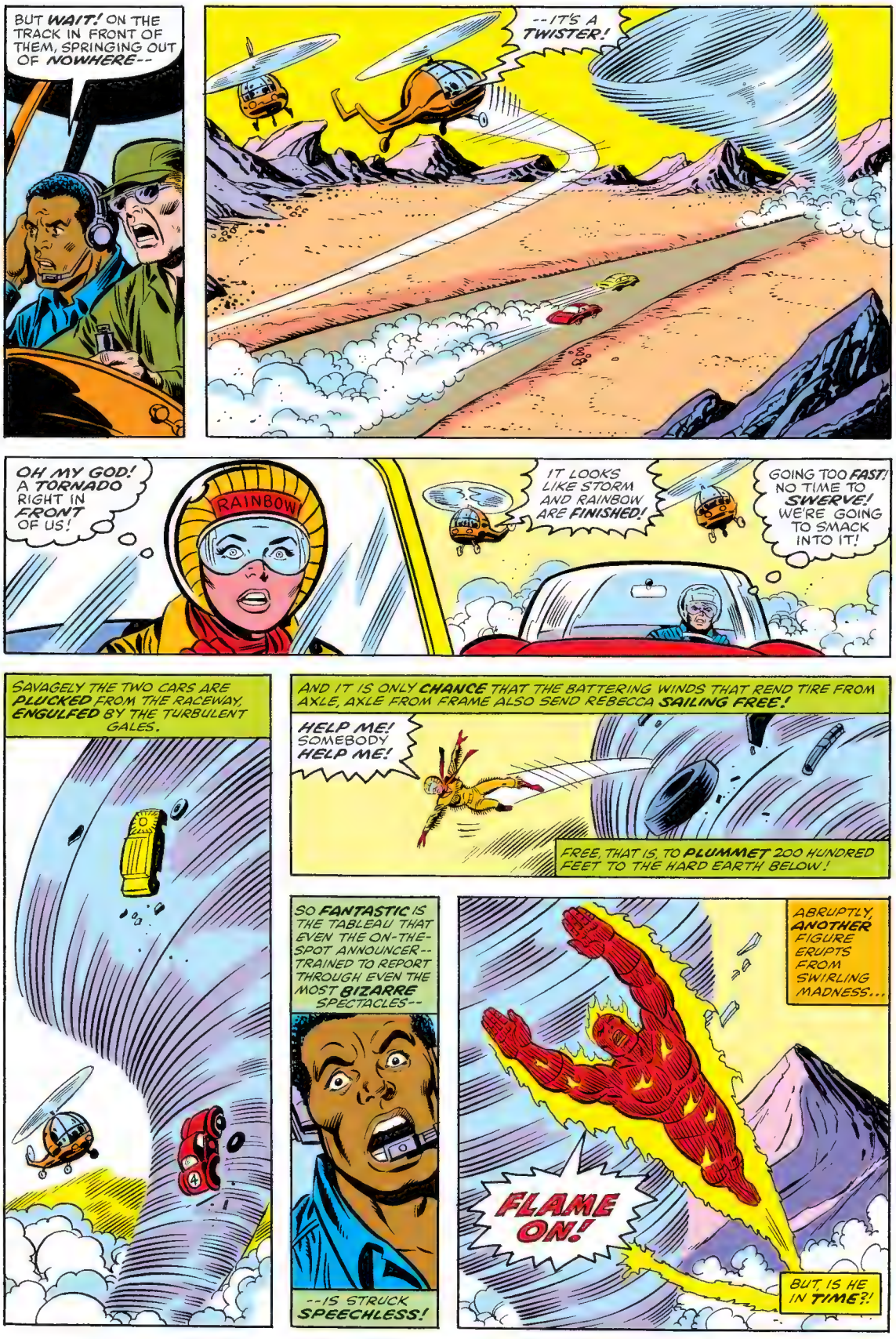

--THE ONE, THE ONLY, JOHNNY STORM!
STILL TRADIN'ON YORE IMAGE, HUH, HOTSHOT? COSTUMES DON'T WIN RACES, Y'KNOW.
MR. LONGHORN INSISTED I WEAR IT, HE CLAIMS THERE WOULDN'T EVEN HAVE BEEN A RACE IF I HADN'T AGREED TO COME.
HMMPH!


AND AFTER THE REMAINING CONTESTANTS HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED..
WELL, BRONCO BOB, WE'VE GOT A LOT OF FINE DRIVERS HERE TODAY! I'VE GOTTA ADMIT, I'M ROOTIN' FOR JOHNNY. BUT THERE'S PLENTY OF OTHERS--LIKE REBECCA RAINBOW--WHO WE HEAR JUST WON'T QUIT!
WELL, THADDEUS, THERE'S ONE SURE-FIRE WAY TO KNOW THE WINNER OF THIS RACE.
HOW'S THAT, BOB?
JUST KEEP WATCHIN' AND SEE WHO REACHES THE FINISH LINE FIRST!


IN THE STANDS, THE INSCRUTABLE WYATT WINGFOOT GIVES NO CLUE TO HIS PREFERENCE IN TODAY'S RACE, OTHERS, HOWEVER, ARE BIT MORE VOCAL...
THE RAINBOW CHICK'S GOT IT WRAPPED UP!
YOU KIDDING? SHE WON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST JOHNNY STORM!
BET YOU A COKE?
YOU'RE ON!

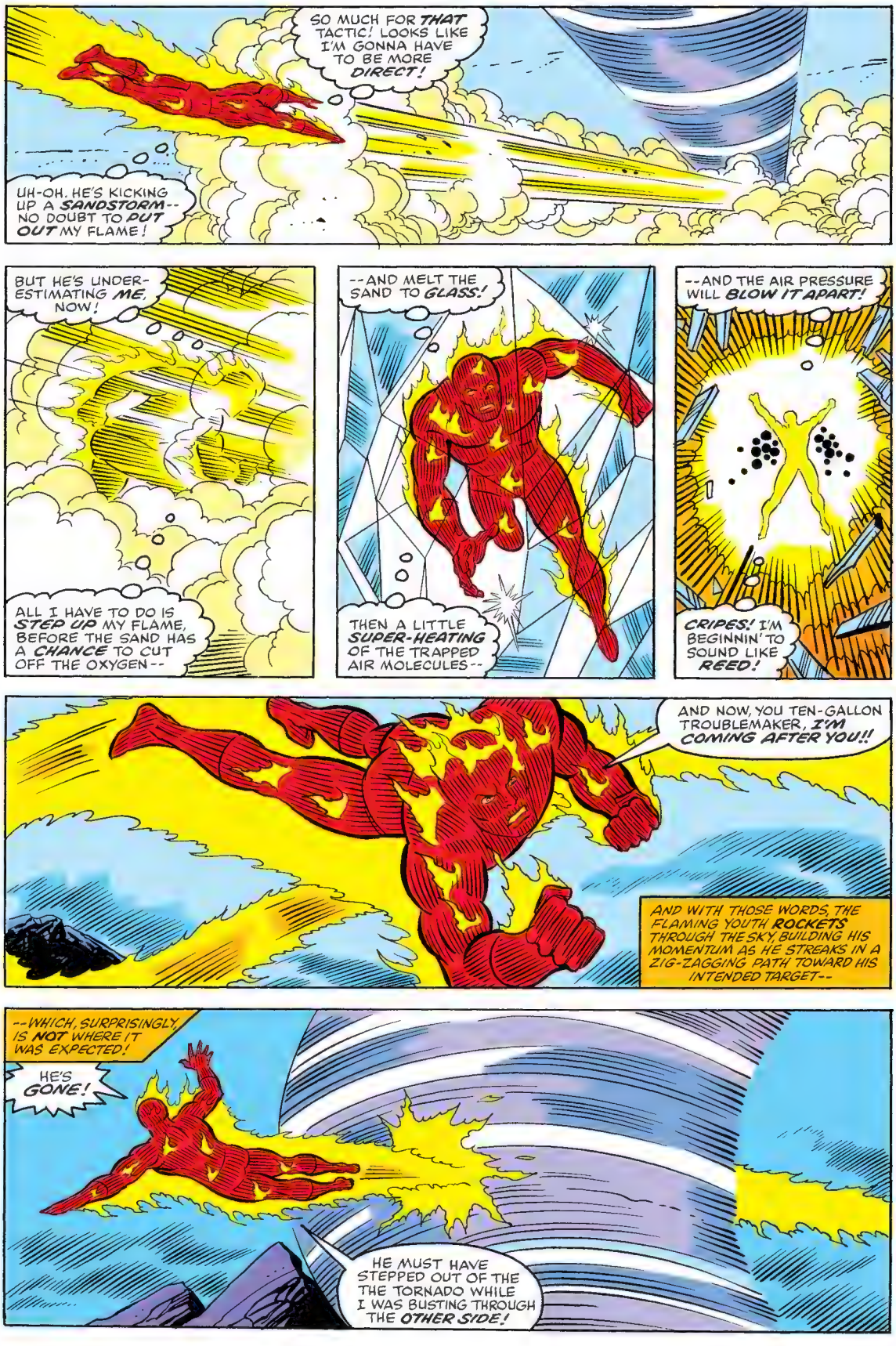

ALL KIDDING ASIDE, BECKY, I DO HOPE THE BEST MA--AH, PERSON WINS.
OUNTY DRAG RACE
WHY, I THANK YOU FOR THAT, HOTSHOT.
4
3


"WAHL, FOLKS, ALL THE DRIVERS ARE STRAPPED IN THEIR BUGGIES...
"...THE FLAG IS BEING DROPPED...
"...AND... THEY'RE OFF!!"
VRROOM!
STORM IS IN THE LEAD! GO, JOHNNY-BOY! GO! YEEEHAH!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! I'VE GOT THE ACCELERATOR PRESSED ALL THE WAY TO THE FLOOR, AND RAINBOW'S GAINING ON ME!
STORM
I'M DOING IT! I'M DOING IT! I'M DOING IT!
RAINBOW
REBECCA RAINBOW HAS PULLED AHEAD, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!
WE REPEAT: REBECCA RAINBOW IS IN THE LEAD!
THIS IS INCREDIBLE, FOLKS! STORM AND RAINBOW HAVE JUST PASSED THE ONE MILE MARKER AND THEY BOTH HAVE BROKEN THE WORLD RECORD FOR THAT DISTANCE!
THEY'VE LEFT THE PACK BEHIND NOW. THERE'S NO DOUBT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN THAT THIS CONTEST IS STRICTLY BETWEEN RAINBOW AND STORM.
AND WHAT A CONTEST IT IS!


BUT WAIT! ON THE TRACK IN FRONT OF THEM, SPRINGING OUT OF NOWHERE--
--IT'S A TWISTER!
OH MY GOD! A TORNADO RIGHT IN FRONT OF US!
RAINBOW
IT LOOKS LIKE STORM AND RAINBOW ARE FINISHED!
GOING TOO FAST! NO TIME TO SWERVE! WE'RE GOING TO SMACK INTO IT!
SAVAGELY THE TWO CARS ARE PLUCKED FROM THE RACEWAY, ENGULFED BY THE TURBULENT GALES.
AND IT IS ONLY CHANCE THAT THE BATTERING WINDS THAT REND TIRE FROM AXLE, AXLE FROM FRAME ALSO SEND REBECCA SAILING FREE!
HELP ME! SOMEBODY HELP ME!
FREE, THAT IS, TO PLUMMET 200 HUNDRED FEET TO THE HARD EARTH BELOW!
SO FANTASTIC IS THE TABLEAU THAT EVEN THE ON-THE-SPOT ANNOUNCER--TRAINED TO REPORT THROUGH EVEN THE MOST BIZARRE SPECTACLES--
--IS STRUCK SPEECHLESS!
ABRUPTLY, ANOTHER FIGURE ERUPTS FROM SWIRLING MADNESS...
FLAME ON!
BUT IS HE IN TIME?!

GOT YOU!
BUT STAY LOOSE, BECKY. I DONT WANT TO SNAP YOUR SPINE!
HOTSHOT, I MAY NOT LIKE YOUR DRIVING--
--BUT I'VE GOT TO APPRECIATE YOUR TIMING!
AND IN MOMENTS, THE DARING RESCUE IS COMPLETED...
THANK GOODNESS THE TORCH WAS HERE TODAY!
LOOK! THE TWISTER'S GETTING SMALLER!
WHAT IS IT, HOTSHOT? THAT TORNADO SPRUNG UP TOO SUDDEN-LIKE TO BE NATURAL!
YOU KNOW IT! ON THE WAY DOWN, I SAW WHAT LOOKED LIKE A MAN INSIDE THAT THING!
AN' I'VE GOTTA HUNCH, FROM THE WAY THE WIND'S DYIN' DOWN, WE'RE ABOUT TO SEE WHO IT IS!
I WONDER, IS IT SOMEBODY I'VE FOUGHT BEFORE--AN OLD FF BADDIE BACK FOR A REMATCH?!
WAHL, PARDNER, CAIN'T SAY WE'VE EVER BEEN FORMLY INTRODUCED--
--BUT COULD YUH EVER FERGET... THE TEXAS TWISTER?*
YEP, AH'M BACK--AN' AH'M A GUNNIN' FER YUH, TORCH!
* T.T. PUT ON AN AUDITION FOR THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR IN F.F. #177 -- MAVERICK MARV.

NOW I REMEMBER YOU! YOU'RE SOME KIND OF MERCENARY, SELLING OUT TO WHOEVER'S GOT THE MOST BREAD!
WELL, BUSTER, THE HUMAN TORCH IS NOBODY'S MEAL TICKET--
--AN' BY THE TIME I GET DONE MOPPIN' UP THE PLACE WITH YOU, YOU'LL WISH YOU WERE BACK ON THE UNEMPLOYMENT LINE!
AW, NOW... EV'RYBODY'S GOTTA MAKE A LIVIN' SOMEHOW--
--KIN I HELP IT IF'N FATE DECIDED TUH GIVE ME MORE'N A FAIR SHARE'A TALENT TUH TRADE ON?
JOHNNY!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, BECKY. I THINK THAT WAS JUST TO SHOW ME WHAT HE CAN DO!
LOOKS LIKE HE'S JUST REVVIN' UP FOR THE REAL ATTACK NOW.
AND EVEN IF I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HE'S UP TO--
--JOHNNY STORM ISN'T GONNA JUST WAIT TO BE KNOCKED DOWN AGAIN!
LET'S SEE HOW HIS WHIRLWIND STAYS UP AGAINST FLAME-PROPELLED CHUNKS OF ASPHALT!
QUITE WELL, UNFORTUNATELY.
YEOW! THE BLASTED THINGS ARE BOUNCIN' RIGHT BACK-- AT US!
RUN!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME TWICE!


SO MUCH FOR THAT TACTIC! LOOKS LIKE I'M GONNA HAVE TO BE MORE DIRECT!
UH-OH. HE'S KICKING UP A SANDSTORM-- NO DOUBT TO PUT OUT MY FLAME!
BUT HE'S UNDER-ESTIMATING ME, NOW!
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS STEP UP MY FLAME, BEFORE THE SAND HAS A CHANCE TO CUT OFF THE OXYGEN--
--AND MELT THE SAND TO GLASS!
THEN A LITTLE SUPER-HEATING OF THE TRAPPED AIR MOLECULES--
--AND THE AIR PRESSURE WILL BLOW IT APART!
CRIPES! I'M BEGINNIN' TO SOUND LIKE REED!
AND NOW, YOU TEN-GALLON TROUBLEMAKER, I'M COMING AFTER YOU!!
AND WITH THOSE WORDS, THE FLAMING YOUTH ROCKETS THROUGH THE SKY, BUILDING HIS MOMENTUM AS HE STREAKS IN A ZIG-ZAGGING PATH TOWARD HIS INTENDED TARGET--
--WHICH, SURPRISINGLY, IS NOT WHERE IT WAS EXPECTED!
HE'S GONE!
HE MUST HAVE STEPPED OUT OF THE THE TORNADO WHILE I WAS BUSTING THROUGH THE OTHER SIDE!

YORE PURDY QUICK, YOUNG FELLER. THET'S 'ZACKLY WHUT I DID.
HOW'S 'BOUT COMIN' DOWN HEAH AND HAVIN' THIS OUT MAN TO MAN?
CLOSE ENOUGH FOR YOU TO ATTACK AGAIN? NO THANKS, COWBOY!
THE SKY'S MY ELEMENT.
CAIN'T YUH GET IT THROUGH YORE STUBBORN HAID I DON'T NEED TUH BE CLOSE TUH YUH--
--TUH BEAT YUH?
TWIN TORNADOES! BUT THEY APPEARED TOO FAST FOR ME TO AVOID!
THEY'RE CREATING A VACUUM-- SNUFFING MY FLAME!
'COURSE, I DON'T WANT TUH KILL YA, SO I'LL MAKE YUH A BIT OF A CUSHION--
--LAHK SO...!
THETAWAY, YUH'LL LAND RAHGHT IN MAH TERRITORY.
POW!
NOW, ALL THET'S LEFT IS TURNIN' YUH OVER TUH MAH EMPLOYERS!
HE'S TAKEN OUT JOHNNY!
AT THAT MOMENT, AS REBECCA'S SUPPLY TRUCK TRUNDLES ONTO THE SCENE, WITH WYATT WINGFOOT AT THE WHEEL...
BECKY! WHAT'S GOING ON? I SAW THE TORNADO FROM THE STANDS... GOT HERE AS FAST AS I COULD!
IT'S NOT JUST A TORNADO, WYATT--
--IT'S A SUPER-VILLAIN! AN' IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING REAL QUICK-LIKE-- JOHNNY'S A GONER!

GOTTA ADMIT, YOUNG FELLER, YUH'VE GOT A LOTTA GRIT. AH ALMOST HATE HAVIN' TUH TURN YUH OVER TUH--
HUH? WHUT'S THAT SOUND--?
WHAL, I'LL BE! FOLKS 'ROUND HERE'R MORE STUBBORN THAN A MULE.
NO! HE'S TOO POWER-FUL! STAY BACK!
STILL TOO GROGGY TO STOP THEM!
SORRY, HOTSHOT, YOU SAVED MY LIFE, THE LEAST I CAN DO IS TRY AN' SAVE YOR'N!
A PICK-UP TRUCK AIN'T MUCH TO FIGHT WITH--
--BUT IT'S ALL WE GOT!
IT'S TOO LATE, BECKY! THE TWISTER'S FORMED ANOTHER TORNADO!
YOU'VE GOT SUPPLIES IN THIS TRUCK-- A HUNDRED GALLONS OF GASOLINE! IF WE HIT THAT TORNADO, IT'LL EXPLODE!
IT'S TOO LATE TO STOP NOW, WYATT! I THINK WE'D BETTER--
--JUMP!!
VA WHOOM!
IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE EXPLOSION, WYATT IS THE FIRST TO RECOVER...
... A SIGN, NO DOUBT, OF THE STAMINA PASSED ON TO HIM BY HIS COMANCHE ANCESTORS!
HIS WILLINGNESS TO COURAGEOUSLY CONFRONT AN ENEMY WHOSE POWER FAR OUTSTRIPS HIS, HOWEVER, IS DECIDEDLY HIS OWN!
REGRETTABLY, COURAGE ALONE IS NOT ALWAYS ENOUGH.
WITNESS...
THET'S A MAHTY FINE PUNCH YUH GOT THERE, INJUN--
--BUT ONE PUNCH AIN'T ENOUGH TUH TAKE OUT THE TEXAS TWISTER!

NOR WAS THAT ENOUGH TO DEFEAT ONE OF THE KEEWAZI TRIBE.
IT AIN'T, HUH? THEN AH RECKON AH'M JUST GONNA HAVE TO KNOCK YUH DOWN AGIN!
TWISTER! YOU CAME HERE FOR ME! LEAVE THE OTHERS OUT OF THIS!
I DON'T GET IT! WITH HIS POWER, WHY TAKE ON WYATT WITH HIS FISTS?
UNLESS... THAT EXPLOSION TOOK MORE OUT OF HIM THAN HE WANTS TO LET ON!
HOW 'BOUT IT, COWBOY? OR ARE YA GETTIN' TIRED!?
STILL KICKIN', HUH, YOUNG FELLER? WAHL, IF'N YUH WANT ME--
-- COME AN' GET ME!
NOT THIS AGAIN!
DOESN'T HIDING IN TORNADOES GET TIRESOME, TEX?
HE'S TRYIN' TO GOAD ME INTO FOLLOWING HIM INSIDE HIS CYCLONE.
GUESS NOBODY EVER TOLD HIM THE HUMAN TORCH DOESN'T FALL FOR THE SAME TRICK TWICE!
ATTACKIN' HIM HEAD ON GOT ME NOWHERE.
BUT IF I SURROUND HIS TORNADO WITH A FLAME TRAIL...
...IT JUST MAY MAKE THINGS TOO HOT FOR HIM TO HANDLE!
"UH-HUH. THOUGHT THAT'D DO IT!"
P-LOW!

YOU HAD ENOUGH, COWBOY BOB?
WAHL, PARDNER, I GOTTA ADMIT, THIS AIN'T AS EASY AS I THOUGHT IT'D BE!
AN' THIS PLACE'S STARTIN' TO GET A MITE CROWDED FER MAH TASTES.
SO I GUESS I'LL TAKE A TIP FROM OL' ROBERT E. LEE. EVEN HE KNEW WHEN TO STOP FIGHTIN'.
YORE A MAHTY FINE FIGHTER, YOUNG FELLER--
--I CAN SEE WHY MY EMPLOYERS WANTED YOU!
WAIT! WHO ARE YOUR EMPLOYERS?! WHY DO THEY WANT ME?!
IT'S TOO LATE, HOTSHOT--
--HE'S GONE.
JOHNNY, CAN'T YOU GO AFTER HIM?
'FRAID NOT, WYATT. MY POWERS HAVE REACHED THEIR LIMIT, TOO!
MY BOY, THAT WAS SENSATIONAL!
THE FANS LOVED IT--AND NO WONDER! IT BEATS THE DAYLIGHTS OUT OF ANY DRAG RACE I EVER SEEN!
BUT THIS'S TOO BIG FOR JUST A ONCE A YEAR ATTRACTION!
WE GOTTA MAKE IT A WEEKLY! YESSEREE, PEOPLE WILL COME FROM MILES AROUND TO SEE YOU PERFORM!
WHY, WITH YOU AND THAT TALL COW-BOY--IT JUST CAN'T MISS! WE'LL PUT THIS TOWN ON THE MAP!
C'MON, SON, I'LL BUY YOU A BEER WHILE WE DISCUSS THE DETAILS!
BUT--BUT I DIDN'T...! HE WASN'T...!
WELL, WYATT, 'PEARS YOUR OLD SCHOOL CHUM'S ABOUT TO BECOME A SHOWMAN!
I HOPE HE CAN STAND THE EXCITEMENT.
NEXT ISSUE: DAY OF THE DEATH DEMON

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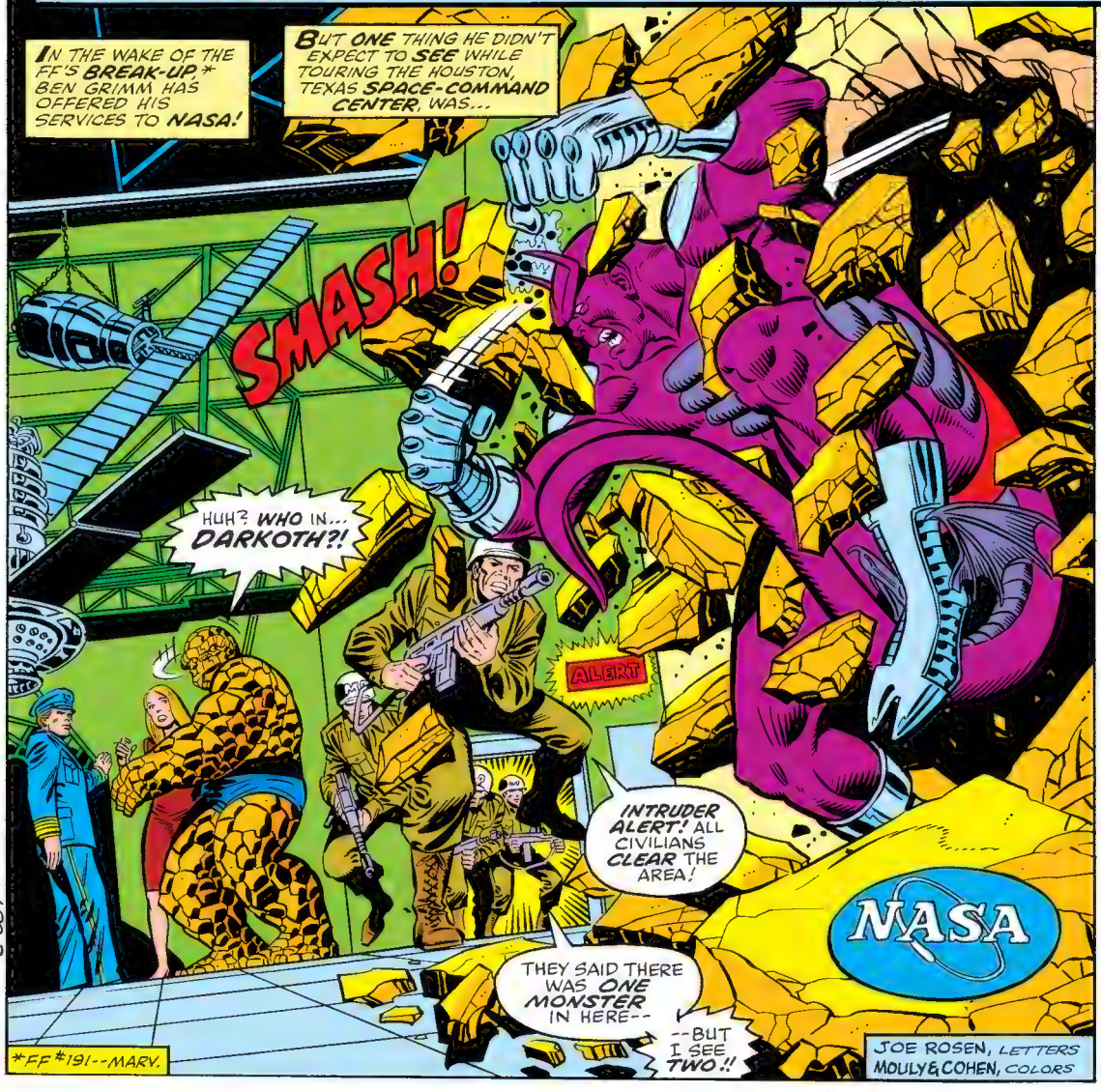
FANTASTIC FOUR®
CRY DOOM! CRY DARKOTH!
pollard sinnott
AND WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, CRY FOR POOR BEN GRIMM, HAVING TO FACE THIS MONSTER WITHOUT HIS FAMOUS PARTNERS!

A brilliant scientist— his best friend— the woman he loves— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human!
MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! Now they are the FANTASTIC FOUR— and the world will never be the same again!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!®

WEIN & POLLARD PLOTTERS * BILL MANTLO GUEST SCRIPTER * KEITH POLLARD & JOE SINNOTT ARTISTS * MARV WOLFMAN EDITOR

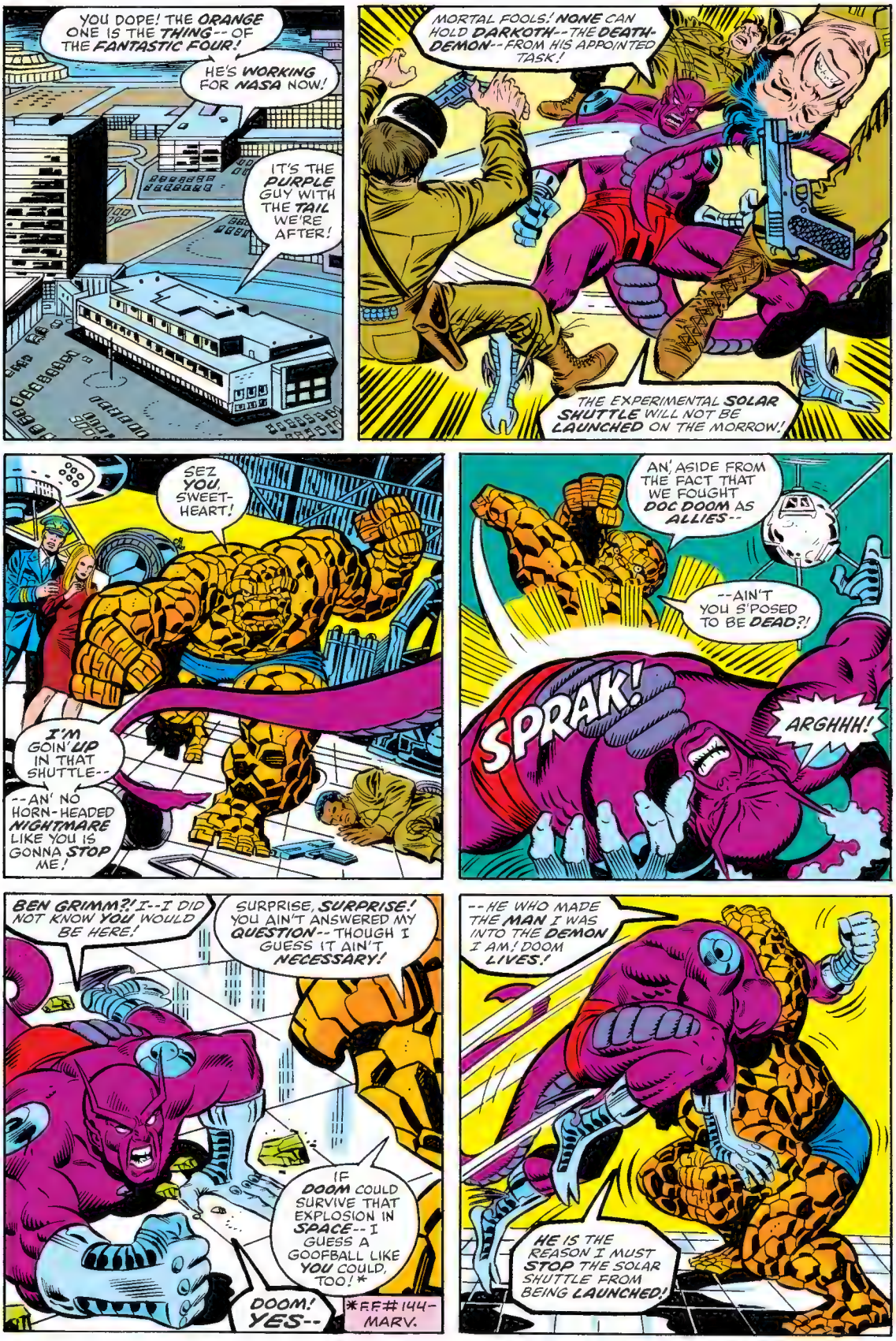
DAY OF THE DEATH-DEMON!

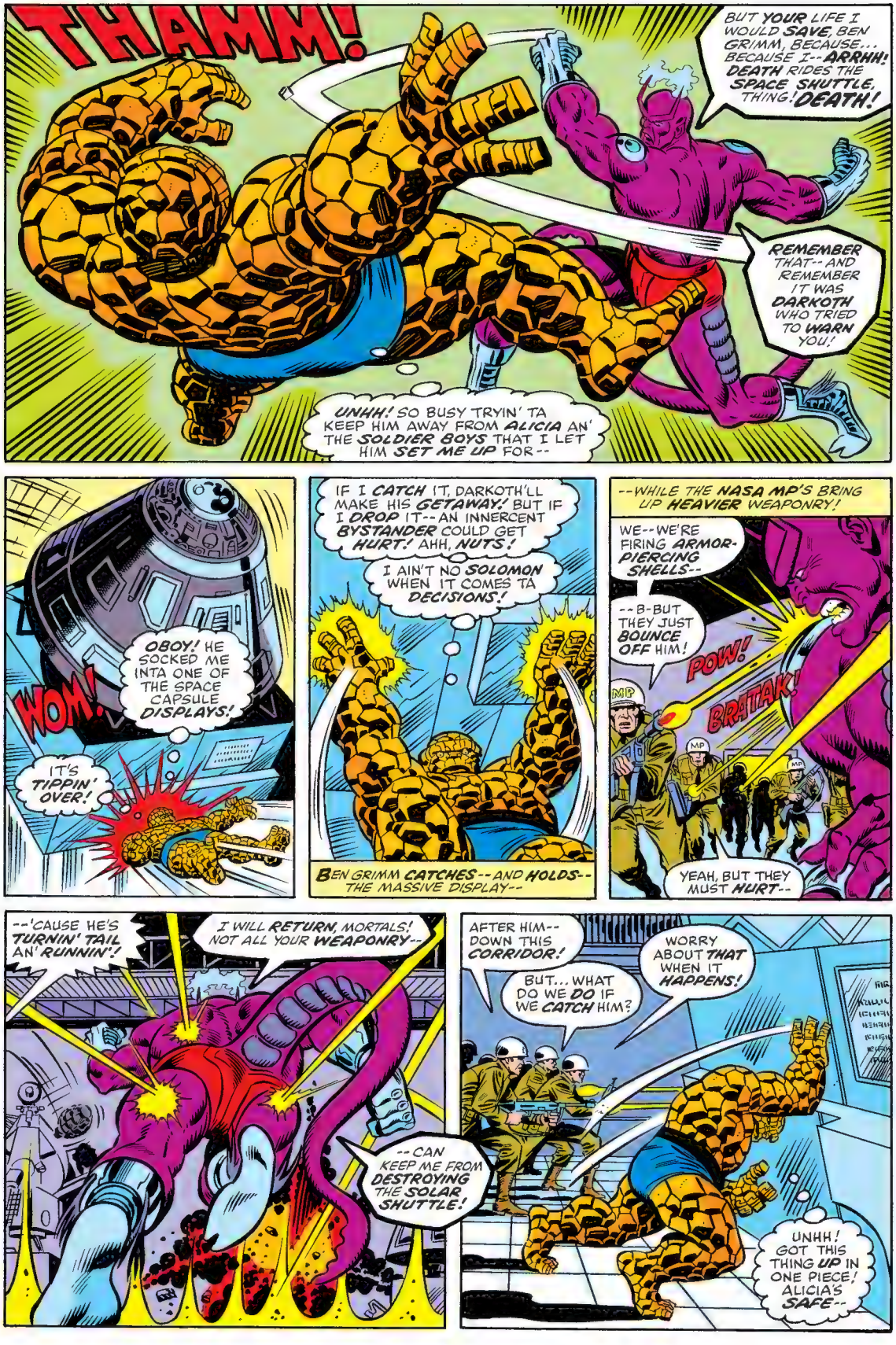

IN THE WAKE OF THE FF'S BREAK-UP,* BEN GRIMM HAS OFFERED HIS SERVICES TO NASA!
BUT ONE THING HE DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE WHILE TOURING THE HOUSTON, TEXAS SPACE-COMMAND CENTER, WAS...
SMASH!
HUH? WHO IN... DARKOTH?!
ALERT
INTRUDER ALERT! ALL CIVILIANS CLEAR THE AREA!
NASA
THEY SAID THERE WAS ONE MONSTER IN HERE--
--BUT I SEE TWO!!

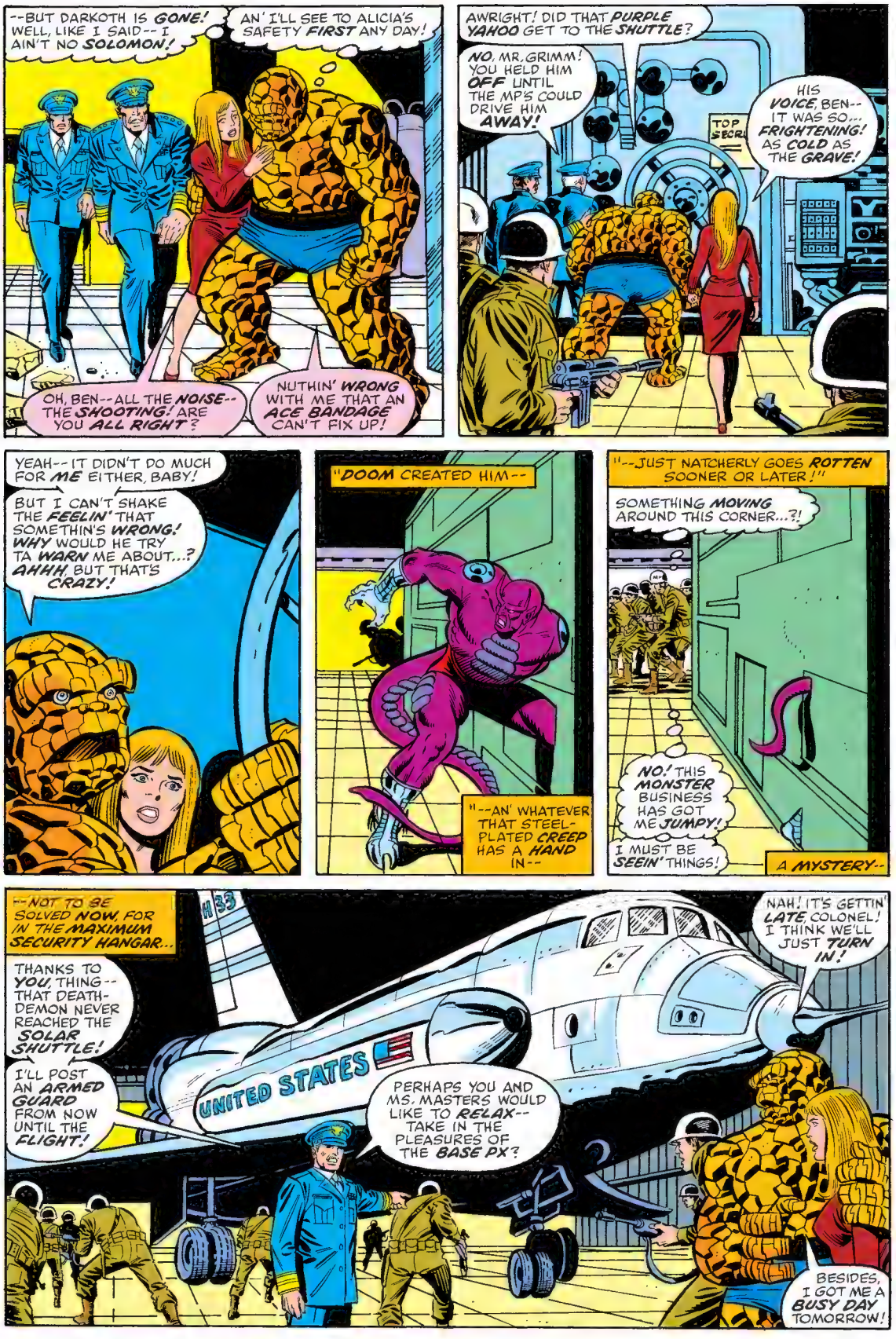
*FF #191--MARV.

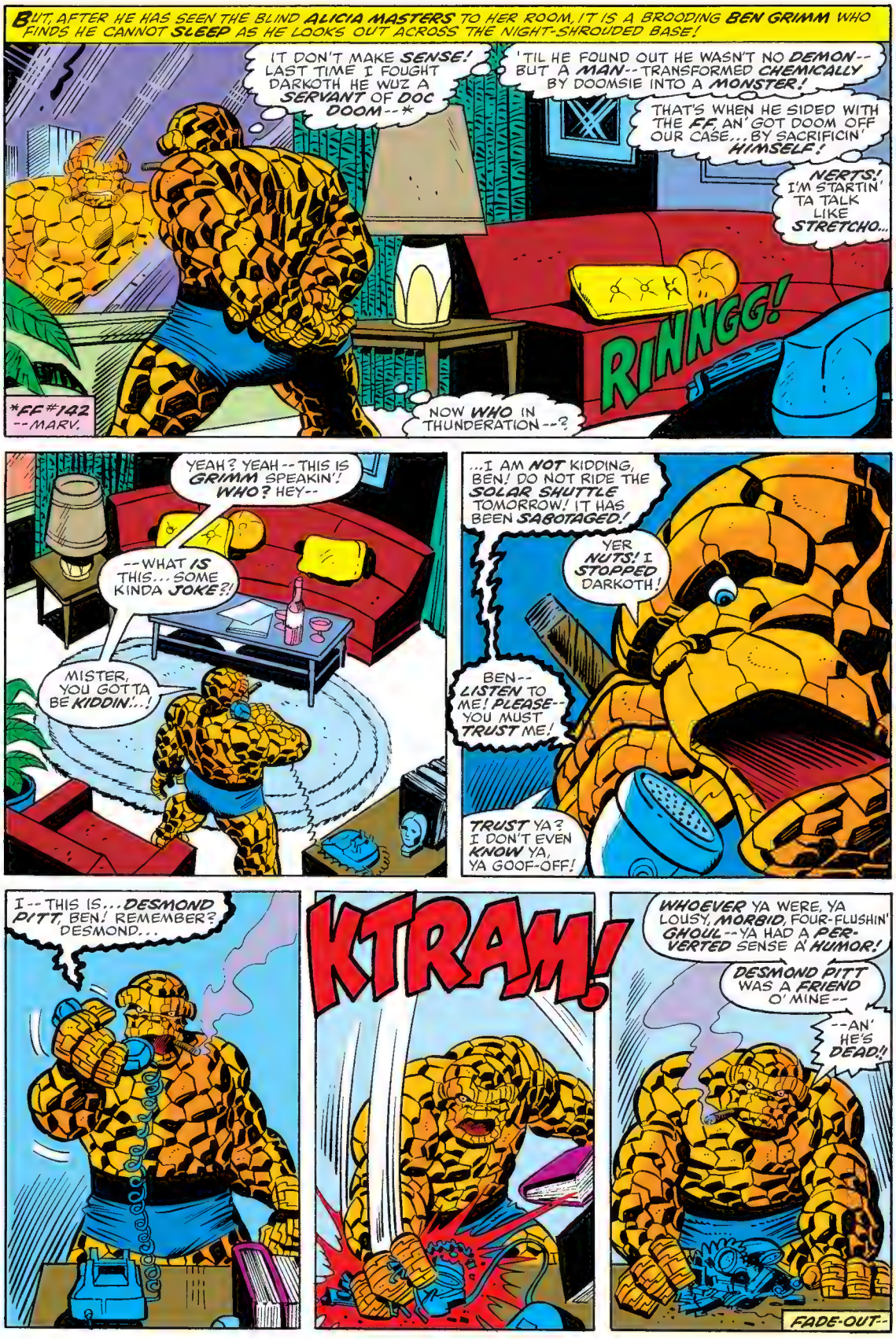
JOE ROSEN, LETTERS
MOULY & COHEN, COLORS

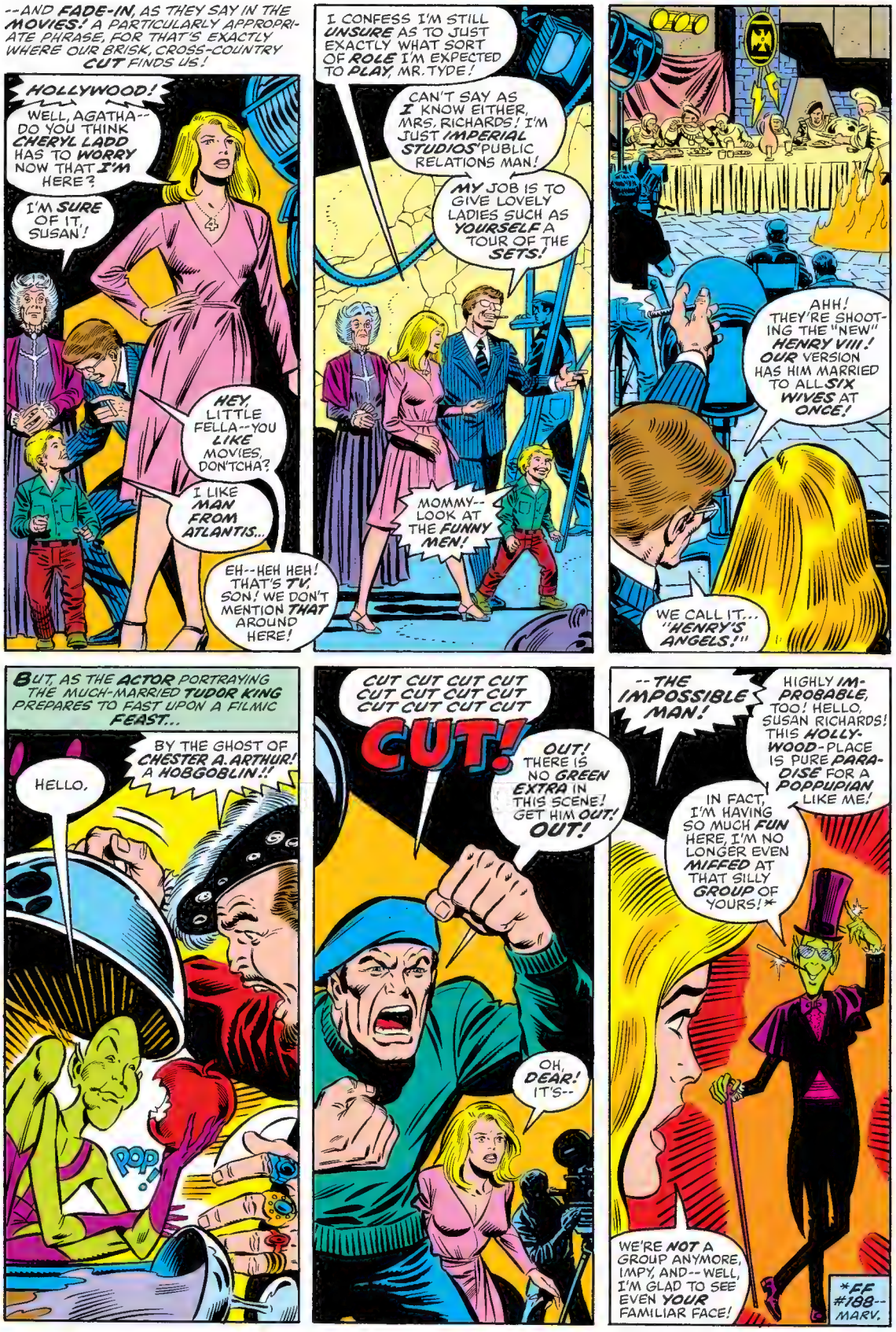
C-689

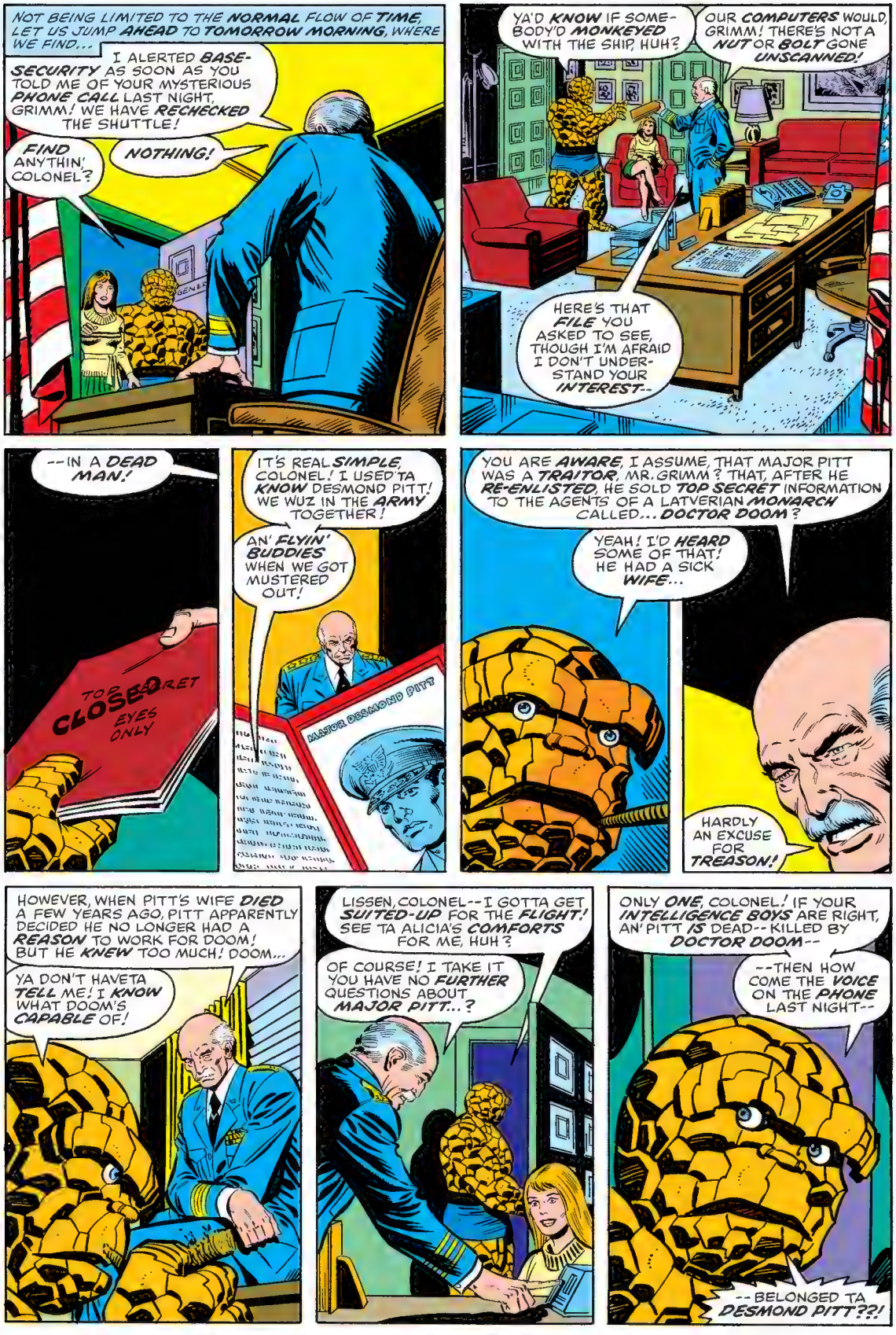

YOU DOPE! THE ORANGE ONE IS THE THING-- OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
HE'S WORKING FOR NASA NOW!
IT'S THE PURPLE GUY WITH THE TAIL WE'RE AFTER!
MORTAL FOOLS! NONE CAN HOLD DARKOTH--THE DEATH-DEMON--FROM HIS APPOINTED TASK!
THE EXPERIMENTAL SOLAR SHUTTLE WILL NOT BE LAUNCHED ON THE MORROW!
SEZ YOU, SWEET-HEART!
I'M GOIN' UP IN THAT SHUTTLE--
--AN' NO HORN-HEADED NIGHTMARE LIKE YOU IS GONNA STOP ME!
AN', ASIDE FROM THE FACT THAT WE FOUGHT DOC DOOM AS ALLIES--
--AIN'T YOU S'POSED TO BE DEAD?!
SPRAK!
ARGHHH!
BEN GRIMM?! I--I DID NOT KNOW YOU WOULD BE HERE!
SURPRISE, SURPRISE! YOU AIN'T ANSWERED MY QUESTION-- THOUGH I GUESS IT AIN'T NECESSARY!
IF DOOM COULD SURVIVE THAT EXPLOSION IN SPACE-- I GUESS A GOOFBALL LIKE YOU COULD, TOO! *
DOOM! YES--
*FF#144-MARV.
--HE WHO MADE THE MAN I WAS INTO THE DEMON I AM! DOOM LIVES!
HE IS THE REASON I MUST STOP THE SOLAR SHUTTLE FROM BEING LAUNCHED!


THAMM!
BUT YOUR LIFE I WOULD SAVE, BEN GRIMM, BECAUSE... BECAUSE I--ARRHH! DEATH RIDES THE SPACE SHUTTLE, THING! DEATH!
REMEMBER THAT--AND REMEMBER IT WAS DARKOTH WHO TRIED TO WARN YOU!
UNHH! SO BUSY TRYIN' TA KEEP HIM AWAY FROM ALICIA AN' THE SOLDIER BOYS THAT I LET HIM SET ME UP FOR--
WOM!
OBOY! HE SOCKED ME INTA ONE OF THE SPACE CAPSULE DISPLAYS!
IT'S TIPPIN' OVER!
IF I CATCH IT, DARKOTH'LL MAKE HIS GETAWAY! BUT IF I DROP IT--AN INNERCENT BYSTANDER COULD GET HURT! AHH, NUTS!
I AIN'T NO SOLOMON WHEN IT COMES TA DECISIONS!
BEN GRIMM CATCHES--AND HOLDS--THE MASSIVE DISPLAY--
--WHILE THE NASA MP'S BRING UP HEAVIER WEAPONRY!
WE--WE'RE FIRING ARMOR-PIERCING SHELLS--
--B-BUT THEY JUST BOUNCE OFF HIM!
POW!
BRATAK!
MP
YEAH, BUT THEY MUST HURT--
--'CAUSE HE'S TURNIN' TAIL AN' RUNNIN'!
I WILL RETURN, MORTALS! NOT ALL YOUR WEAPONRY--
--CAN KEEP ME FROM DESTROYING THE SOLAR SHUTTLE!
AFTER HIM--DOWN THIS CORRIDOR!
BUT... WHAT DO WE DO IF WE CATCH HIM?
WORRY ABOUT THAT WHEN IT HAPPENS!
UNHH! GOT THIS THING UP IN ONE PIECE! ALICIA'S SAFE--

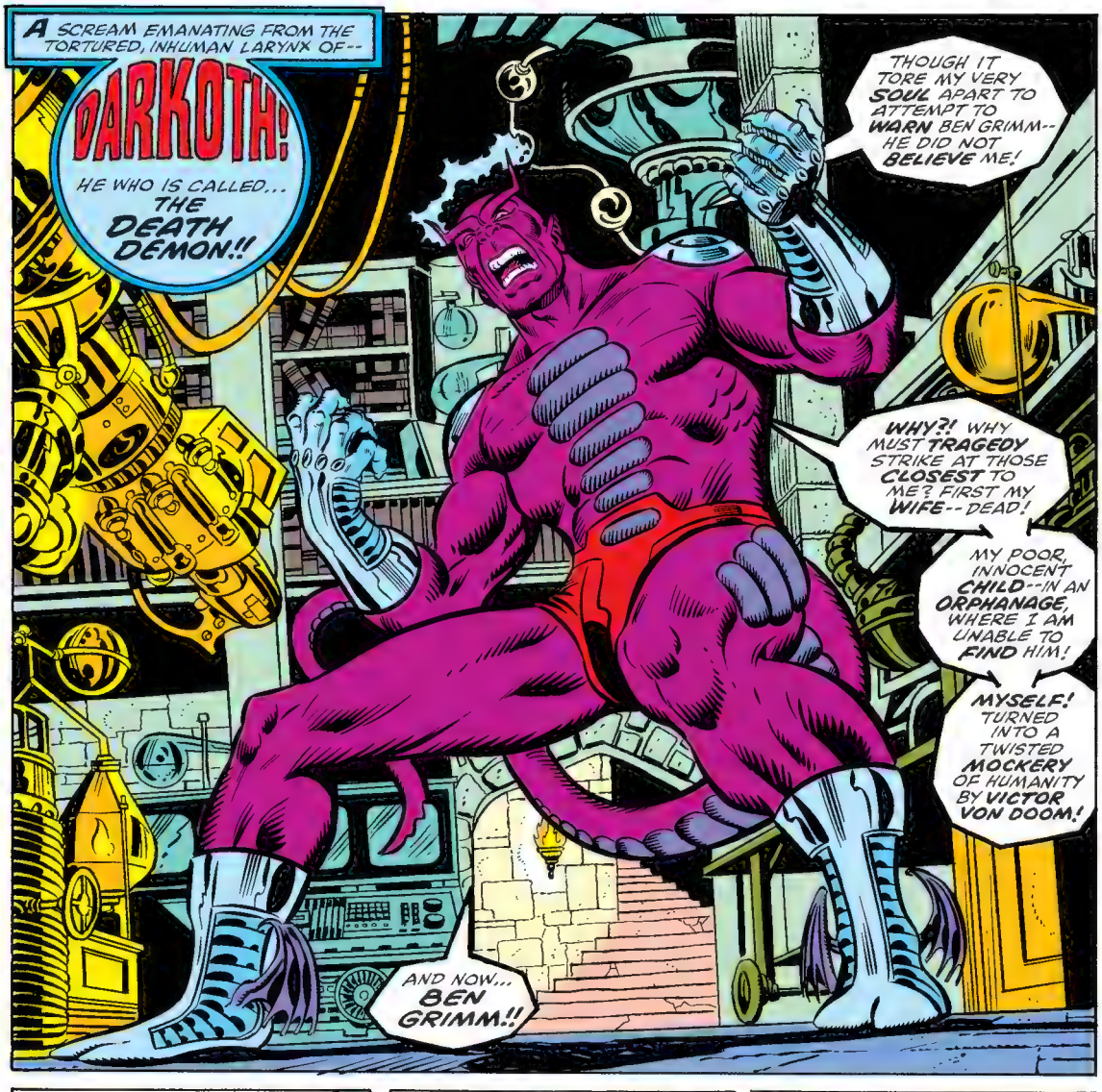

--BUT DARKOTH IS GONE! WELL, LIKE I SAID-- I AIN'T NO SOLOMON!
AN' I'LL SEE TO ALICIA'S SAFETY FIRST ANY DAY!
OH, BEN--ALL THE NOISE-- THE SHOOTING! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
NUTHIN' WRONG WITH ME THAT AN ACE BANDAGE CAN'T FIX UP!
AWRIGHT! DID THAT PURPLE YAHOO GET TO THE SHUTTLE?
NO, MR. GRIMM! YOU HELD HIM OFF UNTIL THE MP'S COULD DRIVE HIM AWAY!
TOP SECRET
HIS VOICE, BEN-- IT WAS SO... FRIGHTENING! AS COLD AS THE GRAVE!
YEAH-- IT DIDN'T DO MUCH FOR ME EITHER, BABY!
BUT I CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELIN' THAT SOMETHIN'S WRONG! WHY WOULD HE TRY TA WARN ME ABOUT...? AHHH, BUT THAT'S CRAZY!
"DOOM CREATED HIM--
"--AN' WHATEVER THAT STEEL-PLATED CREEP HAS A HAND IN--
"--JUST NATCHERLY GOES ROTTEN SOONER OR LATER!"
SOMETHING MOVING AROUND THIS CORNER...?!
NO! THIS MONSTER BUSINESS HAS GOT ME JUMPY! I MUST BE SEEIN' THINGS!
A MYSTERY--
--NOT TO BE SOLVED NOW, FOR IN THE MAXIMUM SECURITY HANGAR...
H33
THANKS TO YOU, THING-- THAT DEATH-DEMON NEVER REACHED THE SOLAR SHUTTLE!
I'LL POST AN ARMED GUARD FROM NOW UNTIL THE FLIGHT!
UNITED STATES
PERHAPS YOU AND MS. MASTERS WOULD LIKE TO RELAX-- TAKE IN THE PLEASURES OF THE BASE PX?
NAH! IT'S GETTIN' LATE COLONEL! I THINK WE'LL JUST TURN IN!
BESIDES, I GOT ME A BUSY DAY TOMORROW!


BUT, AFTER HE HAS SEEN THE BLIND ALICIA MASTERS TO HER ROOM, IT IS A BROODING BEN GRIMM WHO FINDS HE CANNOT SLEEP AS HE LOOKS OUT ACROSS THE NIGHT-SHROUDED BASE!
IT DON'T MAKE SENSE! LAST TIME I FOUGHT DARKOTH HE WUZ A SERVANT OF DOC DOOM--*
'TIL HE FOUND OUT HE WASN'T NO DEMON-- BUT A MAN--TRANSFORMED CHEMICALLY BY DOOMSIE INTO A MONSTER!
THAT'S WHEN HE SIDED WITH THE FF AN' GOT DOOM OFF OUR CASE... BY SACRIFICIN' HIMSELF!
NERTS! I'M STARTIN' TA TALK LIKE STRETCHO...
RINNGG!
NOW WHO IN THUNDERATION--?
*FF #142 --MARV.
YEAH? YEAH--THIS IS GRIMM SPEAKIN'! WHO? HEY--
--WHAT IS THIS... SOME KINDA JOKE?!
MISTER, YOU GOTTA BE KIDDIN'...!
...I AM NOT KIDDING, BEN! DO NOT RIDE THE SOLAR SHUTTLE TOMORROW! IT HAS BEEN SABOTAGED!
YER NUTS! I STOPPED DARKOTH!
BEN-- LISTEN TO ME! PLEASE-- YOU MUST TRUST ME!
TRUST YA? I DON'T EVEN KNOW YA, YA GOOF-OFF!
I--THIS IS... DESMOND PITT, BEN! REMEMBER? DESMOND...
KTRAM!
WHOEVER YA WERE, YA LOUSY, MORBID, FOUR-FLUSHIN' GHOUL--YA HAD A PERVERTED SENSE A' HUMOR!
DESMOND PITT WAS A FRIEND O' MINE--
--AN' HE'S DEAD!!
FADE-OUT--


--AND FADE-IN, AS THEY SAY IN THE MOVIES! A PARTICULARLY APPROPRIATE PHRASE, FOR THAT'S EXACTLY WHERE OUR BRISK, CROSS-COUNTRY CUT FINDS US!
HOLLYWOOD!
WELL, AGATHA--DO YOU THINK CHERYL LADD HAS TO WORRY NOW THAT I'M HERE?
I'M SURE OF IT, SUSAN!
HEY, LITTLE FELLA--YOU LIKE MOVIES, DON'TCHA?
I LIKE MAN FROM ATLANTIS...
EH--HEH HEH! THAT'S TV, SON! WE DON'T MENTION THAT AROUND HERE!
I CONFESS I'M STILL UNSURE AS TO JUST EXACTLY WHAT SORT OF ROLE I'M EXPECTED TO PLAY, MR. TYDE!
CAN'T SAY AS I KNOW EITHER, MRS. RICHARDS! I'M JUST IMPERIAL STUDIOS' PUBLIC RELATIONS MAN!
MY JOB IS TO GIVE LOVELY LADIES SUCH AS YOURSELF A TOUR OF THE SETS!
MOMMY--LOOK AT THE FUNNY MEN!
AHH! THEY'RE SHOOTING THE "NEW" HENRY VIII! OUR VERSION HAS HIM MARRIED TO ALL SIX WIVES AT ONCE!
WE CALL IT... "HENRY'S ANGELS!"
BUT, AS THE ACTOR PORTRAYING THE MUCH-MARRIED TUDOR KING PREPARES TO FAST UPON A FILMIC FEAST...
HELLO,
BY THE GHOST OF CHESTER A. ARTHUR! A HOBGOBLIN!!
POP!
CUT CUT CUT CUT CUT CUT CUT CUT CUT CUT CUT CUT
CUT!
OUT! THERE IS NO GREEN EXTRA IN THIS SCENE! GET HIM OUT! OUT!
OH, DEAR! IT'S--
--THE IMPOSSIBLE MAN!
HIGHLY IMPROBABLE, TOO! HELLO, SUSAN RICHARDS! THIS HOLLYWOOD-PLACE IS PURE PARADISE FOR A POPPUPIAN LIKE ME!
IN FACT, I'M HAVING SO MUCH FUN HERE, I'M NO LONGER EVEN MIFFED AT THAT SILLY GROUP OF YOURS!*
WE'RE NOT A GROUP ANYMORE, IMPY, AND--WELL, I'M GLAD TO SEE EVEN YOUR FAMILIAR FACE!
*FF #188--MARV.


NOT BEING LIMITED TO THE NORMAL FLOW OF TIME, LET US JUMP AHEAD TO TOMORROW MORNING, WHERE WE FIND...
I ALERTED BASE-SECURITY AS SOON AS YOU TOLD ME OF YOUR MYSTERIOUS PHONE CALL LAST NIGHT, GRIMM! WE HAVE RECHECKED THE SHUTTLE!
FIND ANYTHIN', COLONEL?
NOTHING!
YA'D KNOW IF SOME-BODY'D MONKEYED WITH THE SHIP, HUH?
OUR COMPUTERS WOULD, GRIMM! THERE'S NOT A NUT OR BOLT GONE UNSCANNED!
HERE'S THAT FILE YOU ASKED TO SEE, THOUGH I'M AFRAID I DON'T UNDER-STAND YOUR INTEREST--
--IN A DEAD MAN!
TOP SECRET CLOSED EYES ONLY
IT'S REAL SIMPLE, COLONEL! I USED TA KNOW DESMOND PITT! WE WUZ IN THE ARMY TOGETHER!
AN' FLYIN' BUDDIES WHEN WE GOT MUSTERED OUT!
MAJOR DESMOND PITT
YOU ARE AWARE, I ASSUME, THAT MAJOR PITT WAS A TRAITOR, MR. GRIMM? THAT, AFTER HE RE-ENLISTED, HE SOLD TOP SECRET INFORMATION TO THE AGENTS OF A LATVERIAN MONARCH CALLED... DOCTOR DOOM?
YEAH! I'D HEARD SOME OF THAT! HE HAD A SICK WIFE...
HARDLY AN EXCUSE FOR TREASON!
HOWEVER, WHEN PITT'S WIFE DIED A FEW YEARS AGO, PITT APPARENTLY DECIDED HE NO LONGER HAD A REASON TO WORK FOR DOOM! BUT HE KNEW TOO MUCH! DOOM...
YA DON'T HAVETA TELL ME! I KNOW WHAT DOOM'S CAPABLE OF!
LISSEN, COLONEL--I GOTTA GET SUITED-UP FOR THE FLIGHT! SEE TA ALICIA'S COMFORTS FOR ME, HUH?
OF COURSE! I TAKE IT YOU HAVE NO FURTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT MAJOR PITT...?
ONLY ONE, COLONEL! IF YOUR INTELLIGENCE BOYS ARE RIGHT, AN' PITT IS DEAD--KILLED BY DOCTOR DOOM--
--THEN HOW COME THE VOICE ON THE PHONE LAST NIGHT--
--BELONGED TA DESMOND PITT??!

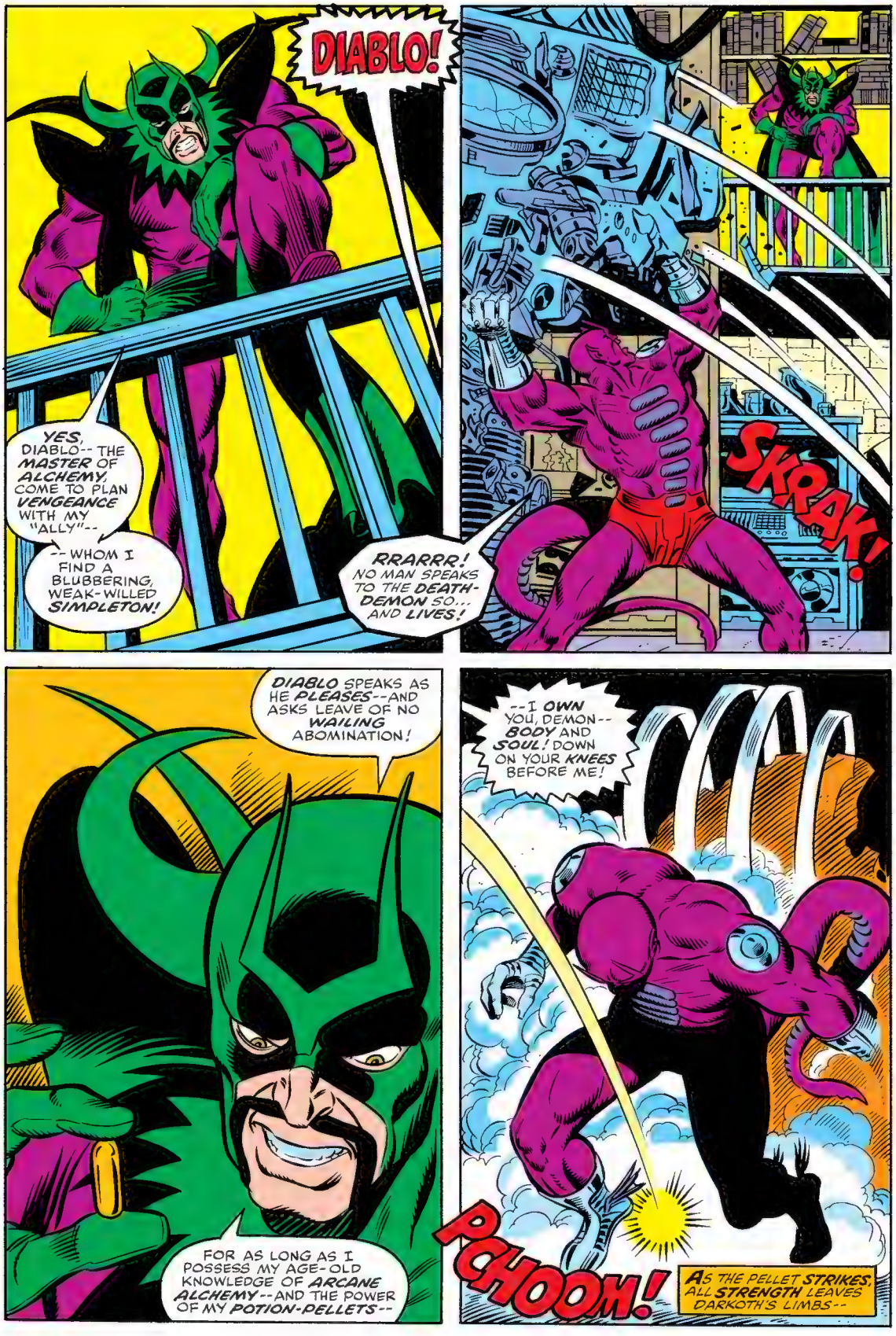
AND, AS THE SUN RISES OVER THE SOUTHWEST, IT IS A THOUGHTFUL BEN GRIMM WHO PREPARES FOR HIS TEST FLIGHT...
WORRIED ABOUT THE FLIGHT, MR. GRIMM?
UNH-UNH! NUTHIN' LIKE THAT, ACE!
JUST TAKIN' ME A MENTAL WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE! A LONG WALK--
-- BACK TA WHEN THE BEST TEST-PILOT IN THE USA-- NEXT TA ME, A' COURSE-- WAS...
DESMOND PITT! GOOD TA SEE YA, BUDDY!
BROUGHT THE WIFE AN' KID TO SEE YOUR FLIGHT, BEN! GONNA MAKE HISTORY THIS TIME!
THAT'S WHAT THEY TELL ME! HEY-- I'LL BUY YOU A BEER WHEN I COME BACK DOWN!
"I WAS TESTIN' ONE O' THEM NEW SUPERSONIC FIGHTERS! TAKE-OFF WENT JUST FINE--
"--AN' SO DID THE MANEUVERS...!"
THAT'S MY BEST FRIEND UP THERE, BABY-- FLYIN' LIKE AN EAGLE!
"BUT SOMEBODY'D PLAYED A LITTLE JOKE WITH THE LANDIN' GEAR! I CAME IN DOIN' 300 MILES PER HOUR, WHEN..."
L-LORD! LANDIN' STRUT'S FOLDING! PLANE'S SKIDDING IN!
BEN'S GONNA CRASH!
"AS THE FUEL FLOODED OUT AN' BEGAN TO IGNITE, DESMOND CHUCKED HIS FEAR--
"--AN' RACED FOR THE BURNIN' PLANE!"
I'M COMIN', BEN!
"HE DIDN'T STOP TA THINK ABOUT HIS OWN SKIN! PULLIN' ME OUTTA THERE, HE GOT ME TO COVER JUST AS..."
VABHOOM!
D-DESMOND...?
I GOT YOU, BOY! YOU'RE SAFE NOW!
"I OWE HIM MY LIFE, ACE!"
BUT... WASN'T HE THE ONE EVERYONE SAID TURNED TRAITOR, MR. GRIMM?
PEOPLE SAY A LOT OF THINGS, ACE-- WITHOUT EVER KNOWIN' WHAT THEY'RE TALKIN' ABOUT!
USA
'SCUSE ME! I GOT ME A SOLAR SHUTTLE TO FLY!
GOOD LUCK, SIR!
WHILE AT A DESERTED A-BOMB TEST BUNKER SOMEWHERE IN DEATH VALLEY...
ARRGHH..
A HORRIBLE SCREAM RENDS THE AIR!

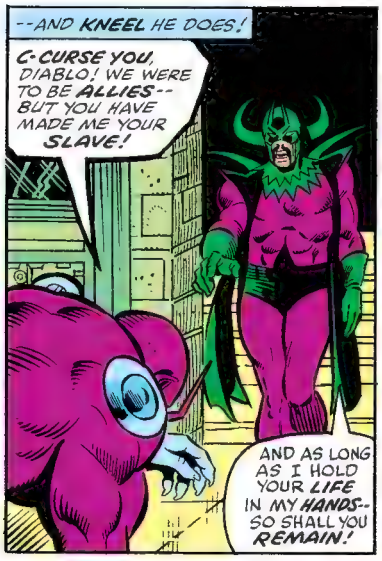

A SCREAM EMANATING FROM THE TORTURED, INHUMAN LARYNX OF--
DARKOTH!
HE WHO IS CALLED... THE DEATH DEMON!!
THOUGH IT TORE MY VERY SOUL APART TO ATTEMPT TO WARN BEN GRIMM--HE DID NOT BELIEVE ME!
WHY?! WHY MUST TRAGEDY STRIKE AT THOSE CLOSEST TO ME? FIRST MY WIFE--DEAD!
MY POOR, INNOCENT CHILD--IN AN ORPHANAGE, WHERE I AM UNABLE TO FIND HIM!
MYSELF! TURNED INTO A TWISTED MOCKERY OF HUMANITY BY VICTOR VON DOOM!
AND NOW... BEN GRIMM!!

YES, BEN GRIMM... MY FRIEND, THOUGH HE KNOWS IT NOT! CAN I BLAME HIM FOR NOT SEEING PAST THE DEMON--WHEN I AM UNABLE TO REVEAL MYSELF--
--AS THE MAN I ONCE WAS?!
A MAN NAMED... DESMOND PITT!

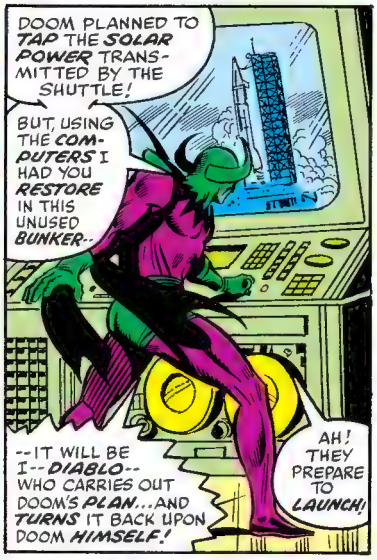
WHEN I LEARNED THAT DOOM'S AGENTS HAD INFILTRATED NASA, I, IN TURN, INFILTRATED THEM TO LEARN WHAT DOOM WANTED!
I COULD CONFIDE IN NO ONE--NOT EVEN MY SUPERIORS! DOOM HAD SPIES EVERYWHERE!
BUT JUST AS I WAS READY TO WARN NASA--MY WIFE DIED! I BECAME MAD--CARELESS--AND DOOM DISCOVERED ME, TURNING ME INTO--

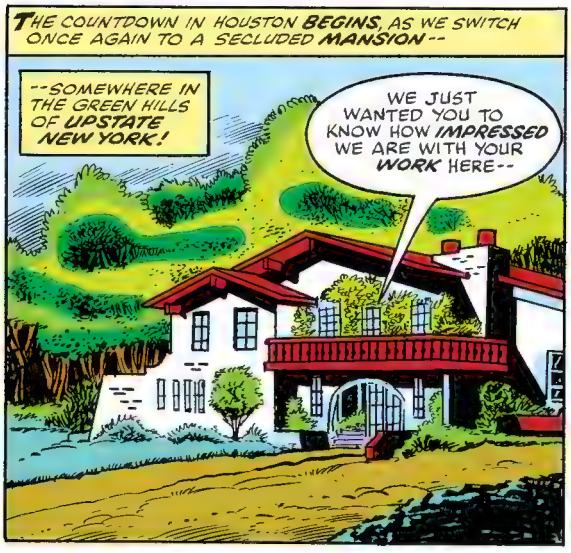
--THIS! A CREATURE GENETICALLY RE-ENGINEERED, CHEMICALLY TRANSFORMED! A DEMON! I COULDN'T RETURN HOME--COULDN'T CLAIM MY CHILD LIKE THIS! AND DESMOND PITT WAS BRANDED...
TRAITOR IS THE WORD YOU SEEK, IS IT NOT, DEMON?

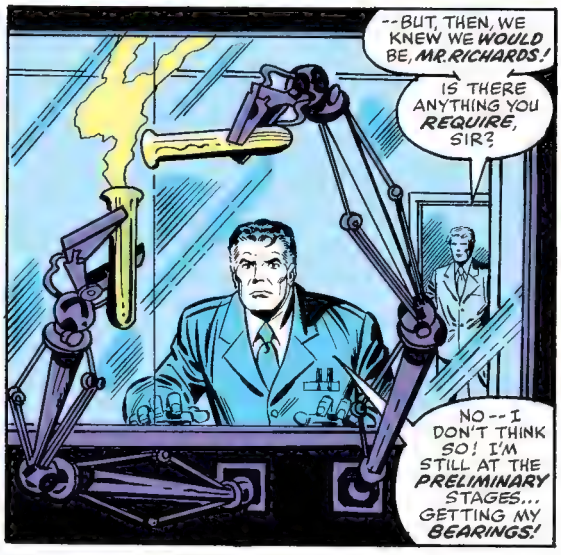

DIABLO!
YES, DIABLO-- THE MASTER OF ALCHEMY, COME TO PLAN VENGEANCE WITH MY "ALLY"--
--WHOM I FIND A BLUBBERING, WEAK-WILLED SIMPLETON!
RRARRR! NO MAN SPEAKS TO THE DEATH-DEMON SO... AND LIVES!
SKRAK!
DIABLO SPEAKS AS HE PLEASES--AND ASKS LEAVE OF NO WAILING ABOMINATION!
FOR AS LONG AS I POSSESS MY AGE-OLD KNOWLEDGE OF ARCANE ALCHEMY--AND THE POWER OF MY POTION-PELLETS--
--I OWN YOU, DEMON-- BODY AND SOUL! DOWN ON YOUR KNEES BEFORE ME!
PCHOOH!
AS THE PELLET STRIKES, ALL STRENGTH LEAVES DARKOTH'S LIMBS--


--AND KNEEL HE DOES!
C-CURSE YOU, DIABLO! WE WERE TO BE ALLIES--BUT YOU HAVE MADE ME YOUR SLAVE!
AND AS LONG AS I HOLD YOUR LIFE IN MY HANDS--SO SHALL YOU REMAIN!

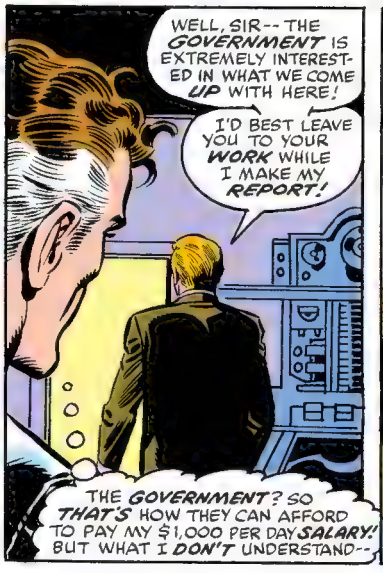
AS DESMOND PITT, YOU KNEW THAT DOOM'S AGENTS HAD SABOTAGED THE PLANS FOR THE SOLAR SHUTTLE YEARS AGO! YOU STOPPED THEM BEFORE THEY COULD REPORT THEIR DEED TO DOOM!
AS PUNISHMENT PITT BECAME DARKOTH--
--AND THEN YOU WERE LOST IN SPACE, UNABLE TO WARN NASA, AND THE SHUTTLE WAS BUILT FROM THE ALTERED PLANS!

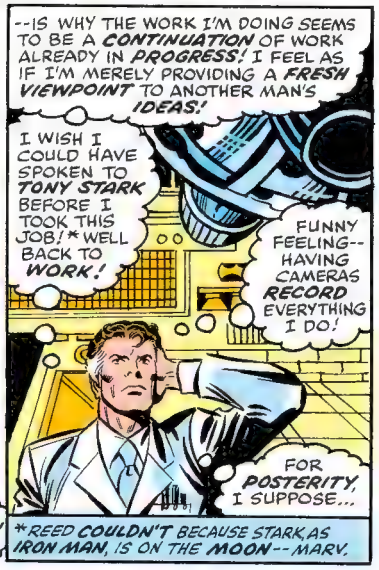

DOOM PLANNED TO TAP THE SOLAR POWER TRANSMITTED BY THE SHUTTLE!
BUT, USING THE COMPUTERS I HAD YOU RESTORE IN THIS UNUSED BUNKER--
--IT WILL BE I--DIABLO--WHO CARRIES OUT DOOM'S PLAN...AND TURNS IT BACK UPON DOOM HIMSELF!
AH! THEY PREPARE TO LAUNCH!

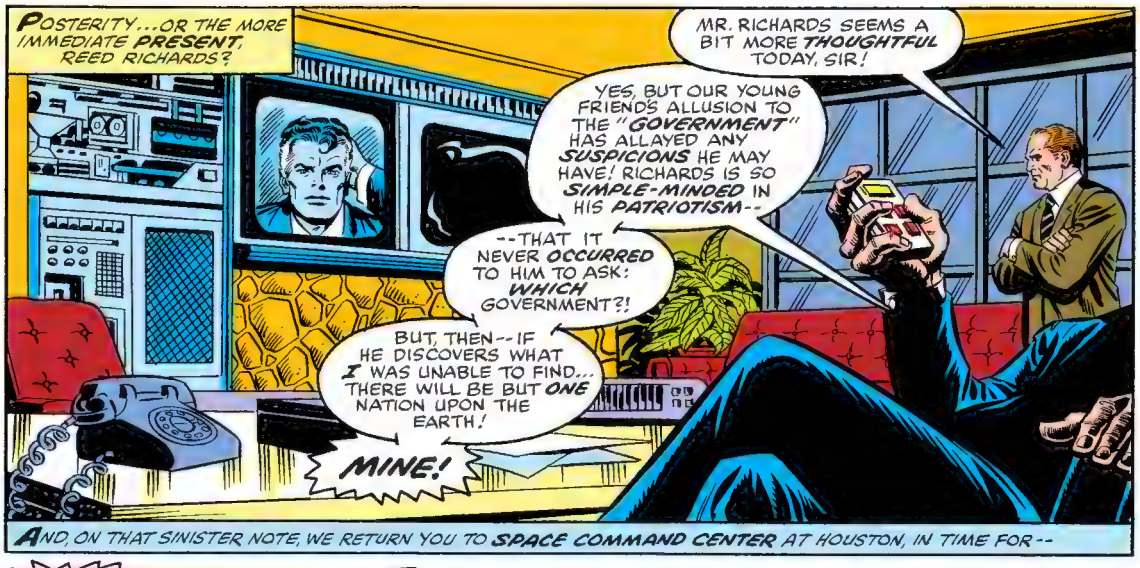

THE COUNTDOWN IN HOUSTON BEGINS, AS WE SWITCH ONCE AGAIN TO A SECLUDED MANSION--
--SOMEWHERE IN THE GREEN HILLS OF UPSTATE NEW YORK!
WE JUST WANTED YOU TO KNOW HOW IMPRESSED WE ARE WITH YOUR WORK HERE--

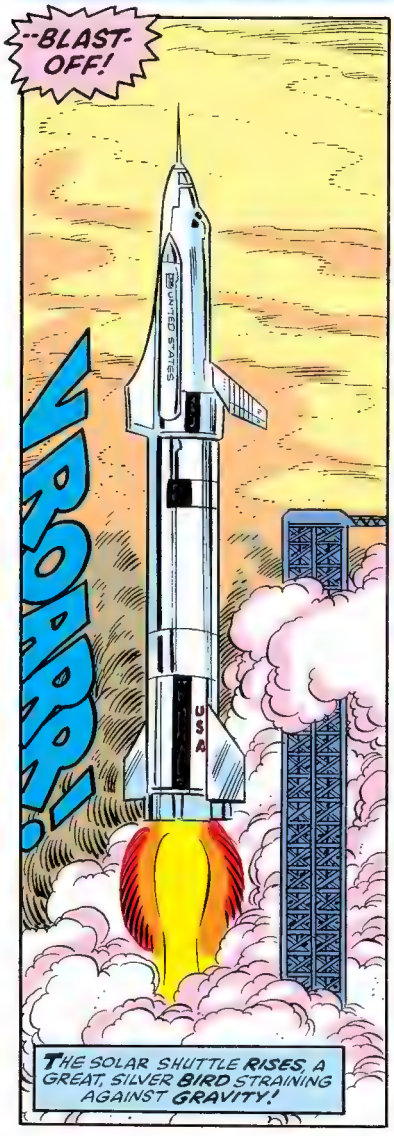

--BUT, THEN, WE KNEW WE WOULD BE, MR. RICHARDS!
IS THERE ANYTHING YOU REQUIRE, SIR?
NO--I DON'T THINK SO! I'M STILL AT THE PRELIMINARY STAGES...GETTING MY BEARINGS!

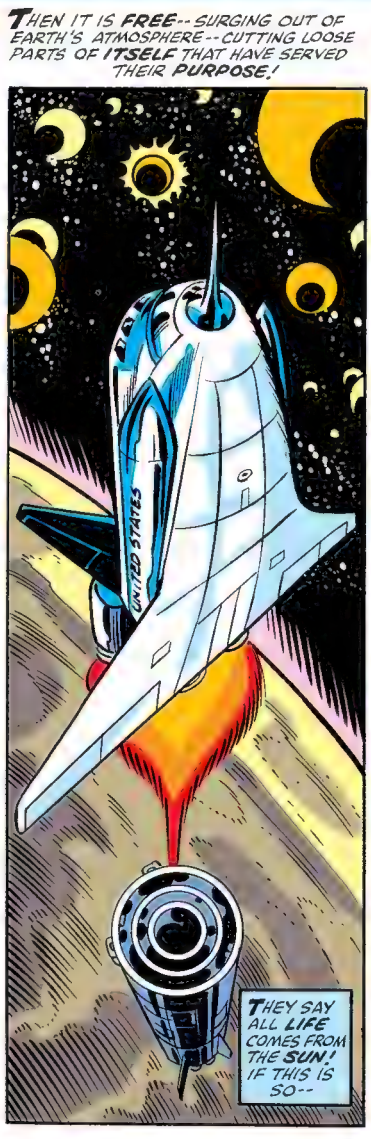
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE ENGAGED IN PURE RESEARCH, SON!
YOU MUST MISS THE EXCITEMENT OF YOUR--ER--FORMER OCCUPATION!
THE FF? NO, WITH MY STRETCHING POWERS GONE--
--THAT'S JUST ANCIENT HISTORY!

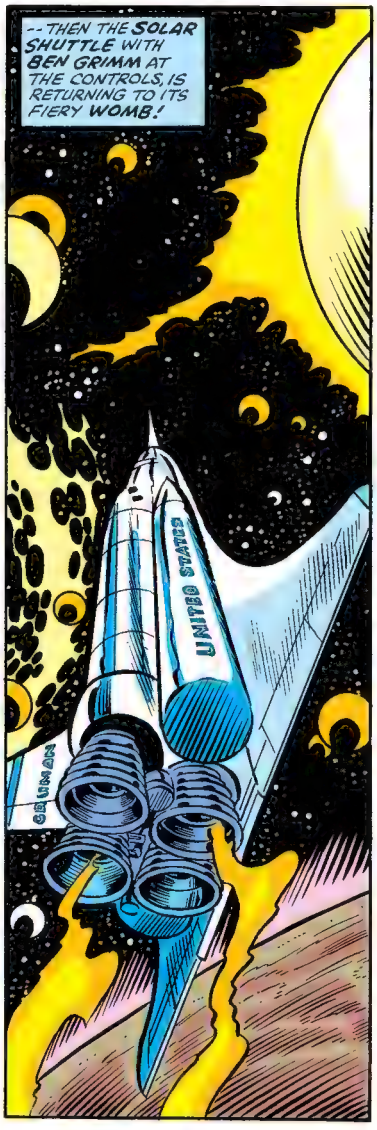

WELL, SIR--THE GOVERNMENT IS EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN WHAT WE COME UP WITH HERE!
I'D BEST LEAVE YOU TO YOUR WORK WHILE I MAKE MY REPORT!
THE GOVERNMENT? SO THAT'S HOW THEY CAN AFFORD TO PAY MY $1,000 PER DAY SALARY! BUT WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND--

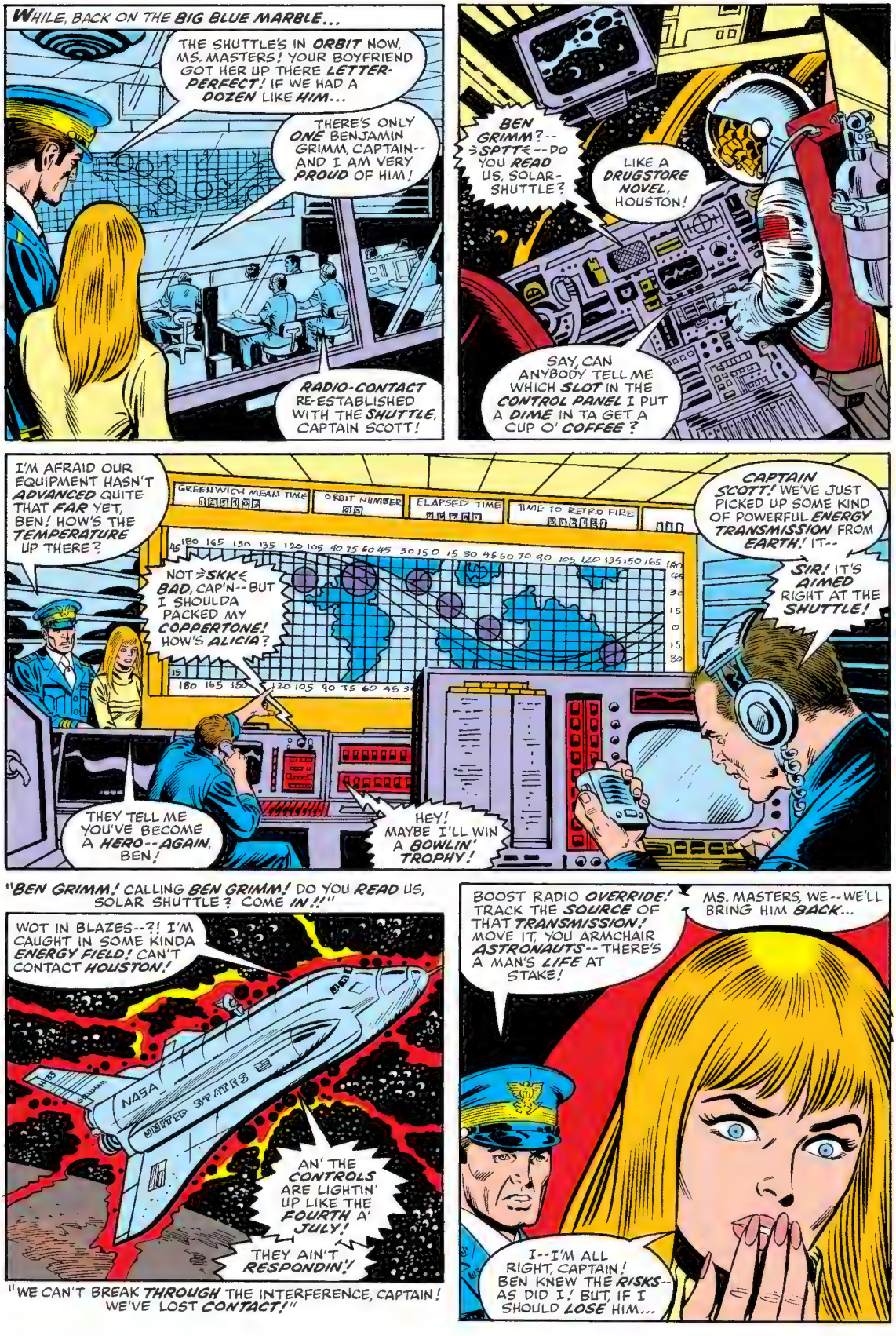

--IS WHY THE WORK I'M DOING SEEMS TO BE A CONTINUATION OF WORK ALREADY IN PROGRESS! I FEEL AS IF I'M MERELY PROVIDING A FRESH VIEWPOINT TO ANOTHER MAN'S IDEAS!
I WISH I COULD HAVE SPOKEN TO TONY STARK BEFORE I TOOK THIS JOB!* WELL BACK TO WORK!
FUNNY FEELING--HAVING CAMERAS RECORD EVERYTHING I DO!
FOR POSTERITY, I SUPPOSE...
*REED COULDN'T BECAUSE STARK, AS IRON MAN, IS ON THE MOON--MARV.


POSTERITY...OR THE MORE IMMEDIATE PRESENT, REED RICHARDS?
MR. RICHARDS SEEMS A BIT MORE THOUGHTFUL TODAY, SIR!
YES, BUT OUR YOUNG FRIEND'S ALLUSION TO THE "GOVERNMENT" HAS ALLAYED ANY SUSPICIONS HE MAY HAVE! RICHARDS IS SO SIMPLE-MINDED IN HIS PATRIOTISM--
--THAT IT NEVER OCCURRED TO HIM TO ASK: WHICH GOVERNMENT?!
BUT, THEN--IF HE DISCOVERS WHAT I WAS UNABLE TO FIND... THERE WILL BE BUT ONE NATION UPON THE EARTH!
MINE!
AND, ON THAT SINISTER NOTE, WE RETURN YOU TO SPACE COMMAND CENTER AT HOUSTON, IN TIME FOR--

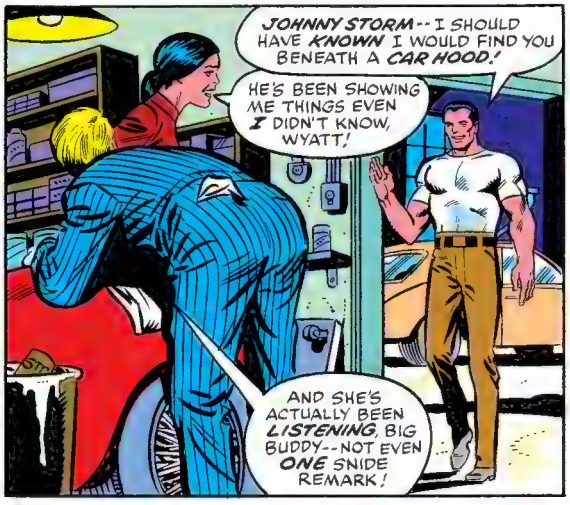

--BLAST-OFF!
ROAR!
UNITED STATES
USA
THE SOLAR SHUTTLE RISES, A GREAT, SILVER BIRD STRAINING AGAINST GRAVITY!


THEN IT IS FREE--SURGING OUT OF EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE--CUTTING LOOSE PARTS OF ITSELF THAT HAVE SERVED THEIR PURPOSE!
UNITED STATES
THEY SAY ALL LIFE COMES FROM THE SUN! IF THIS IS SO--

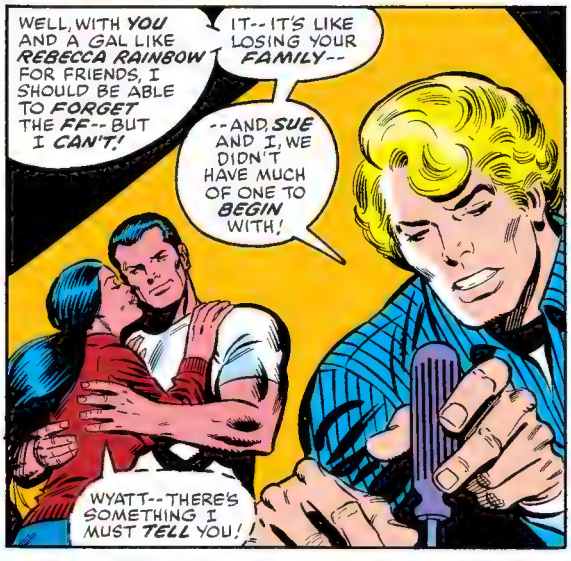

--THEN THE SOLAR SHUTTLE WITH BEN GRIMM AT THE CONTROLS, IS RETURNING TO ITS FIERY WOMB!
UNITED STATES
SOLARMAN

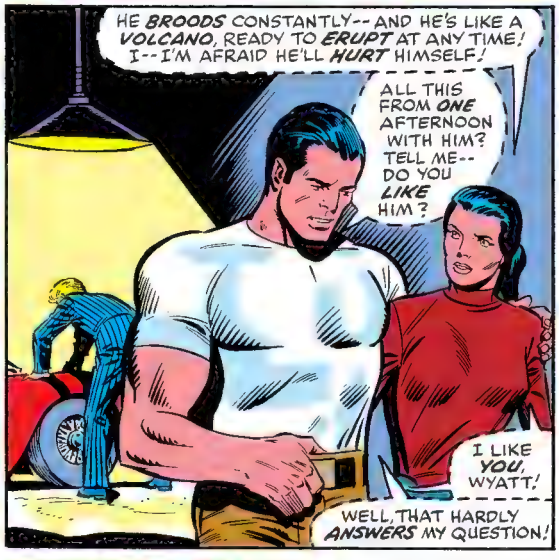

WHILE, BACK ON THE BIG BLUE MARBLE...
THE SHUTTLE'S IN ORBIT NOW, MS. MASTERS! YOUR BOYFRIEND GOT HER UP THERE LETTER-PERFECT! IF WE HAD A DOZEN LIKE HIM...
THERE'S ONLY ONE BENJAMIN GRIMM, CAPTAIN--AND I AM VERY PROUD OF HIM!
RADIO-CONTACT RE-ESTABLISHED WITH THE SHUTTLE, CAPTAIN SCOTT!
BEN GRIMM?--SPTT<--DO YOU READ US, SOLAR-SHUTTLE?
LIKE A DRUGSTORE NOVEL, HOUSTON!
SAY, CAN ANYBODY TELL ME WHICH SLOT IN THE CONTROL PANEL I PUT A DIME IN TA GET A CUP O' COFFEE?
I'M AFRAID OUR EQUIPMENT HASN'T ADVANCED QUITE THAT FAR YET, BEN! HOW'S THE TEMPERATURE UP THERE?
GREENWICH MEAN TIME
ORBIT NUMBER
ELAPSED TIME
TIME TO RETRO FIRE
NOT>SKK< BAD, CAP'N--BUT I SHOULDA PACKED MY COPPERTONE! HOW'S ALICIA?
CAPTAIN SCOTT! WE'VE JUST PICKED UP SOME KIND OF POWERFUL ENERGY TRANSMISSION FROM EARTH! IT--
SIR! IT'S AIMED RIGHT AT THE SHUTTLE!
THEY TELL ME YOU'VE BECOME A HERO--AGAIN, BEN!
HEY! MAYBE I'LL WIN A BOWLIN' TROPHY!
"BEN GRIMM! CALLING BEN GRIMM! DO YOU READ US, SOLAR SHUTTLE? COME IN!!"
WOT IN BLAZES--?! I'M CAUGHT IN SOME KINDA ENERGY FIELD! CAN'T CONTACT HOUSTON!
NASA
UNITED STATES
AN' THE CONTROLS ARE LIGHTIN' UP LIKE THE FOURTH A' JULY!
THEY AIN'T RESPONDIN'!
"WE CAN'T BREAK THROUGH THE INTERFERENCE, CAPTAIN! WE'VE LOST CONTACT!"
BOOST RADIO OVERRIDE! TRACK THE SOURCE OF THAT TRANSMISSION! MOVE IT, YOU ARMCHAIR ASTRONAUTS--THERE'S A MAN'S LIFE AT STAKE!
MS. MASTERS, WE--WE'LL BRING HIM BACK...
I--I'M ALL RIGHT, CAPTAIN! BEN KNEW THE RISKS--AS DID I! BUT, IF I SHOULD LOSE HIM...

FORGIVE US, PILGRIMS, AS WE SWITCH JUST **ONE MORE TIME** (HONEST!) AND PICK UP ON THE **YOUNGEST** MEMBER OF OUR ONCE FABULOUS FOURSOME...

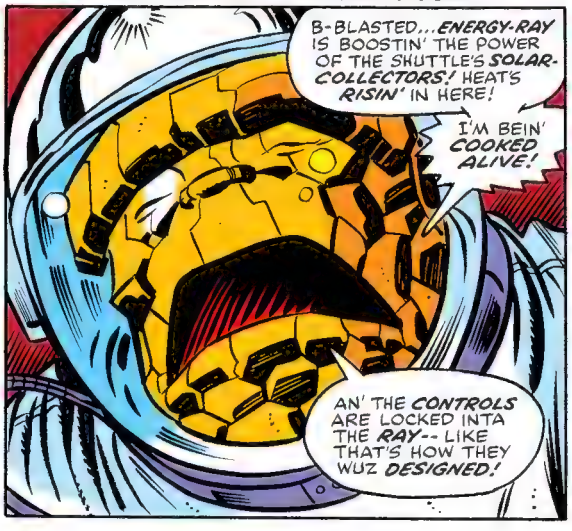

JOHNNY STORM -- I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN I WOULD FIND YOU BENEATH A CAR HOOD!
HE'S BEEN SHOWING ME THINGS EVEN I DIDN'T KNOW, WYATT!
AND SHE'S ACTUALLY BEEN LISTENING, BIG BUDDY -- NOT EVEN ONE SNIDE REMARK!

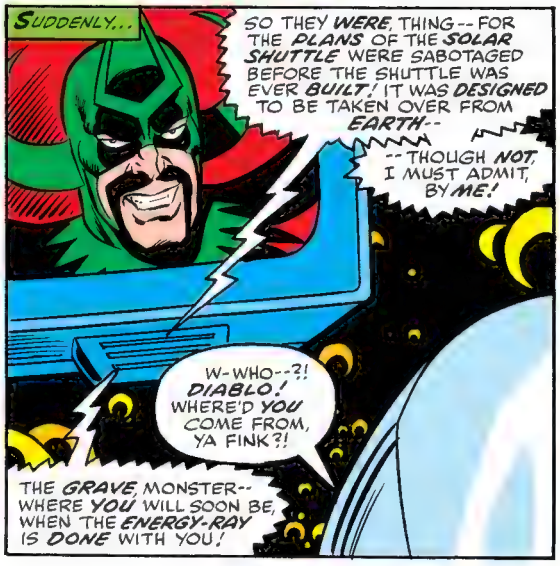
PERHAPS YOU OUGHT TO SAVE HER LIFE MORE OFTEN, JOHNNY -- IT SEEMS TO MELLOW BECKY'S PERSONALITY! *
BUT HOW ARE YOU DOING, JOHNNY?
WHAT YOU MEAN IS: HOW IS THE HUMAN TORCH HOLDING HIMSELF TOGETHER, RIGHT?
*LAST ISH -- MARV.

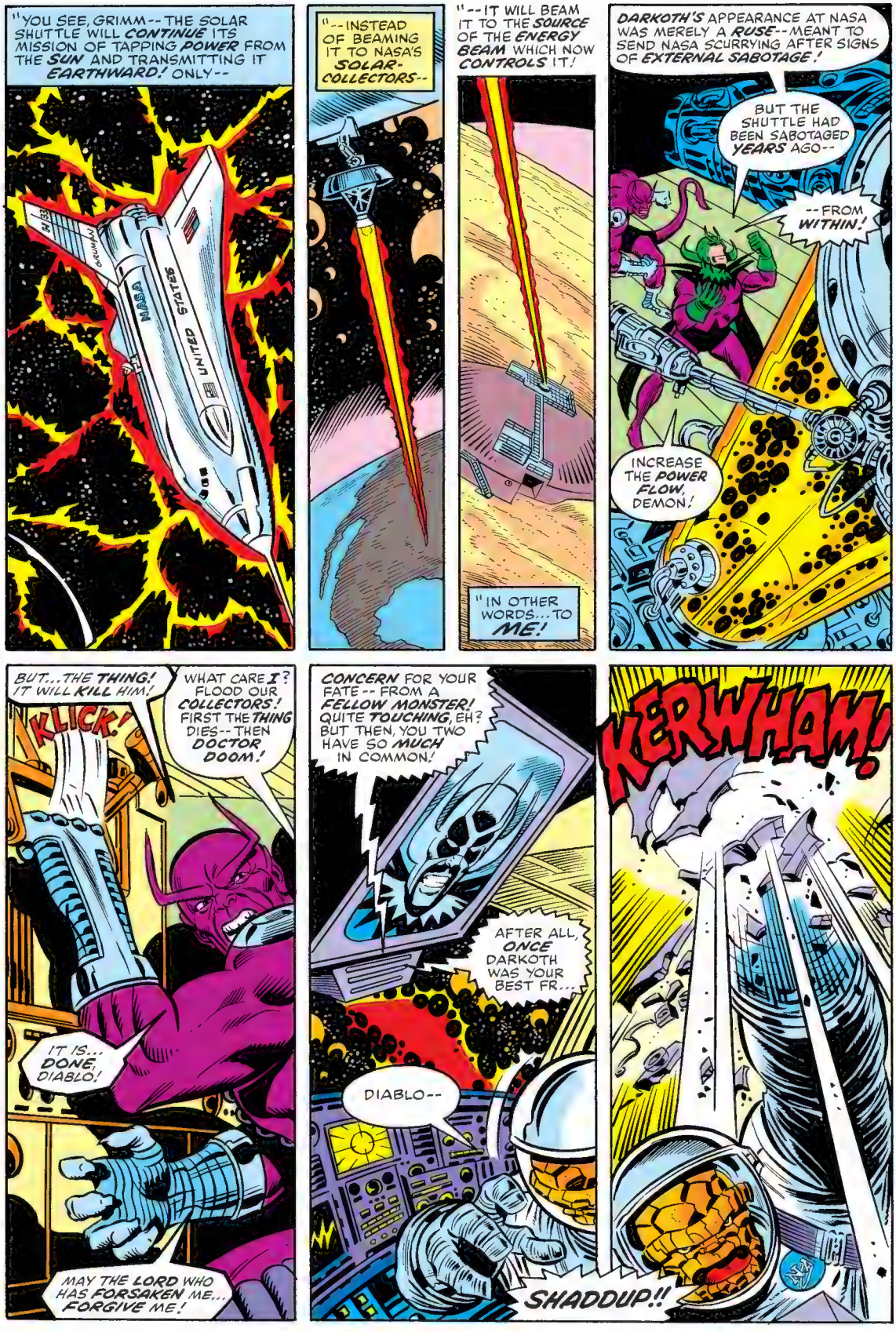

WELL, WITH YOU AND A GAL LIKE REBECCA RAINBOW FOR FRIENDS, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO FORGET THE FF -- BUT I CAN'T!
IT -- IT'S LIKE LOSING YOUR FAMILY --
-- AND SUE AND I, WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH OF ONE TO BEGIN WITH!
WYATT -- THERE'S SOMETHING I MUST TELL YOU!

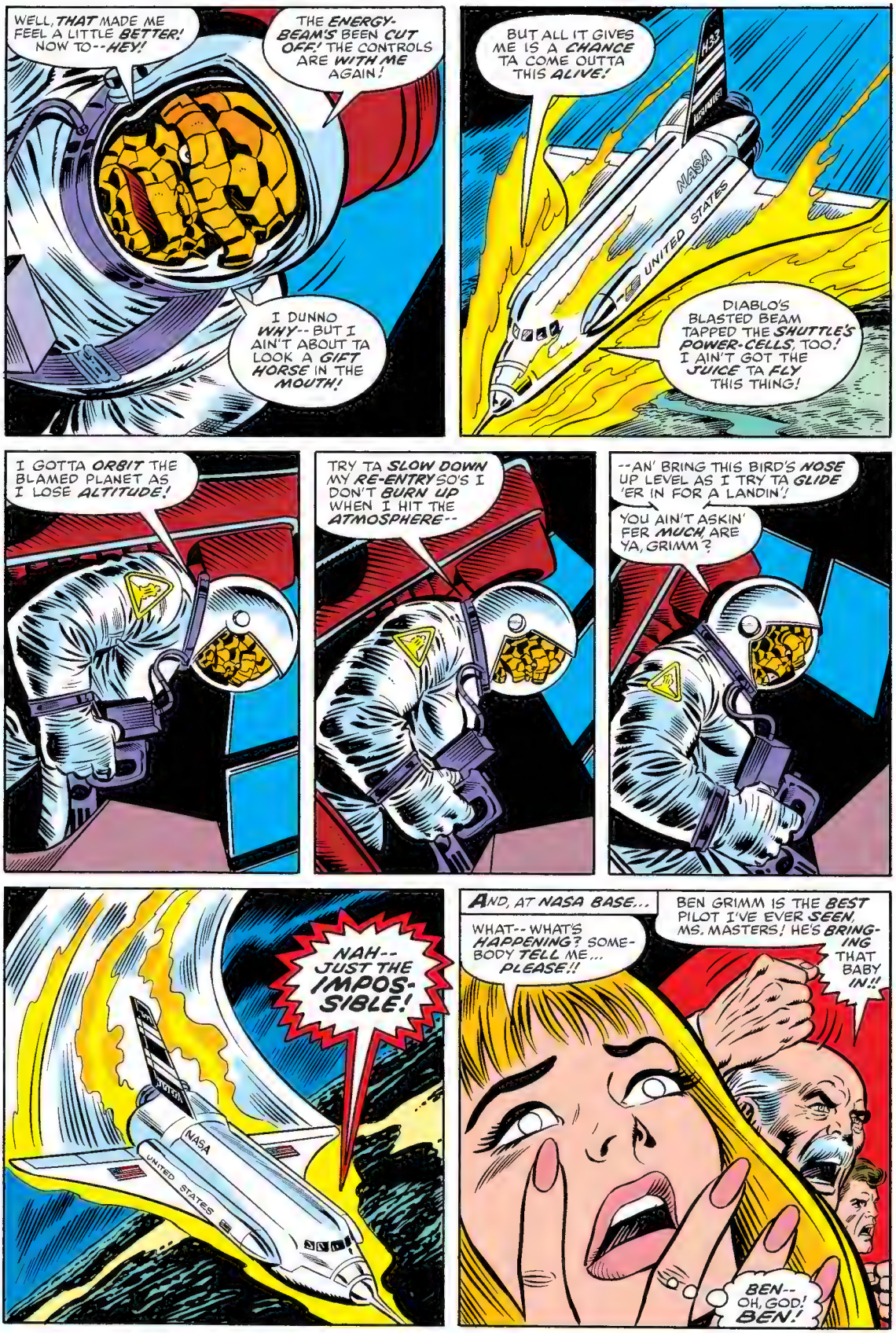

HE BROODS CONSTANTLY -- AND HE'S LIKE A VOLCANO, READY TO ERUPT AT ANY TIME! I -- I'M AFRAID HE'LL HURT HIMSELF!
ALL THIS FROM ONE AFTERNOON WITH HIM? TELL ME -- DO YOU LIKE HIM?
I LIKE YOU, WYATT!
WELL, THAT HARDLY ANSWERS MY QUESTION!

AND, AS **WYATT WINGFOOT** AND **REBECCA RAINBOW** WORRY OVER THE PROBLEMS OF THEIR **FRIEND**...

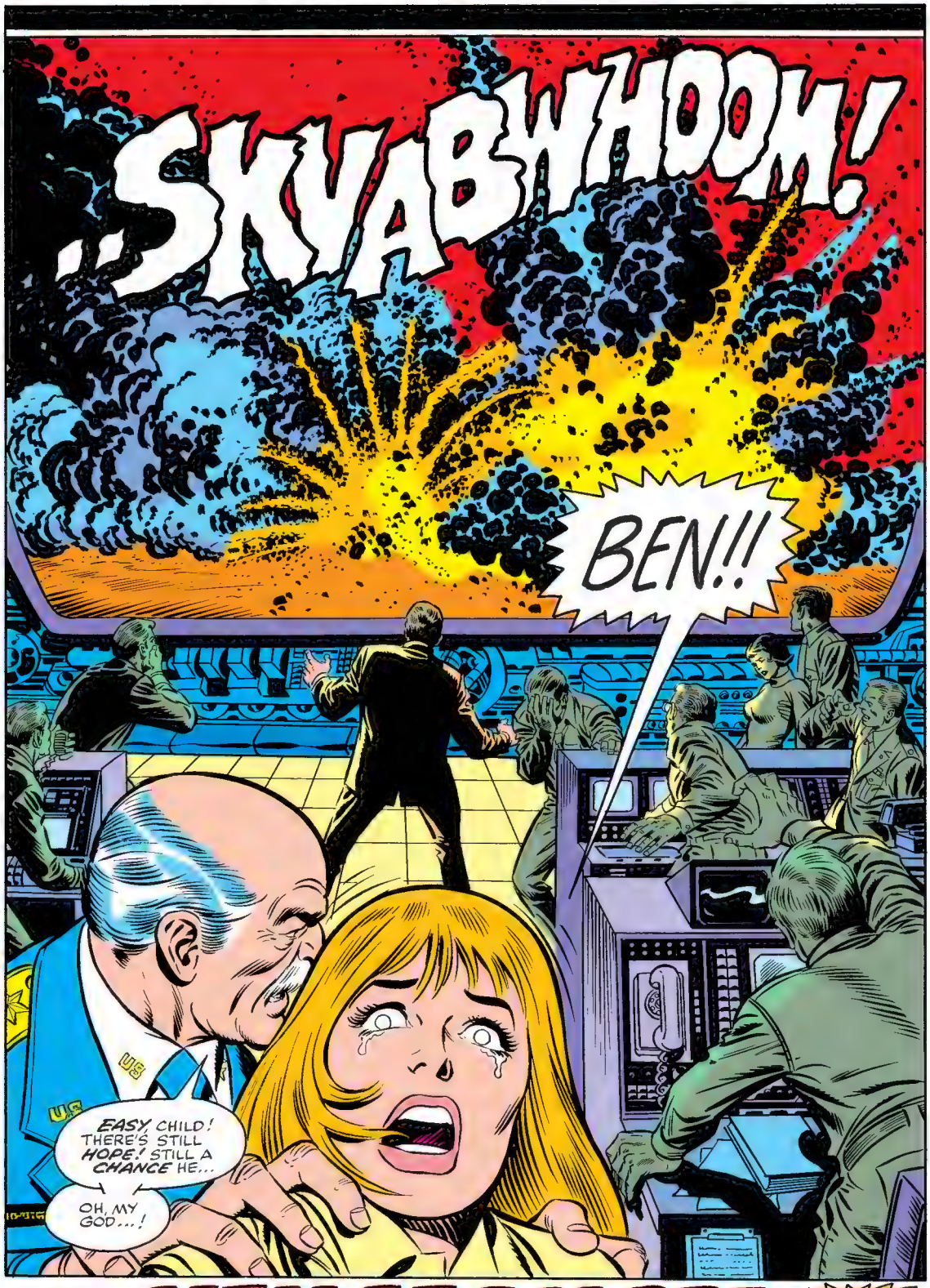

B-BLASTED... ENERGY-RAY IS BOOSTIN' THE POWER OF THE SHUTTLE'S SOLAR-COLLECTORS! HEAT'S RISIN' IN HERE!
I'M BEIN' COOKED ALIVE!
AN' THE CONTROLS ARE LOCKED INTA THE RAY -- LIKE THAT'S HOW THEY WUZ DESIGNED!


SUDDENLY...
SO THEY WERE, THING -- FOR THE PLANS OF THE SOLAR SHUTTLE WERE SABOTAGED BEFORE THE SHUTTLE WAS EVER BUILT! IT WAS DESIGNED TO BE TAKEN OVER FROM EARTH --
-- THOUGH NOT, I MUST ADMIT, BY ME!
W-WHO -- ?! DIABLO! WHERE'D YOU COME FROM, YA FINK?!
THE GRAVE, MONSTER -- WHERE YOU WILL SOON BE, WHEN THE ENERGY-RAY IS DONE WITH YOU!


"YOU SEE, GRIMM--THE SOLAR SHUTTLE WILL CONTINUE ITS MISSION OF TAPPING POWER FROM THE SUN AND TRANSMITTING IT EARTHWARD! ONLY--
NASA
UNITED STATES
"--INSTEAD OF BEAMING IT TO NASA'S SOLAR-COLLECTORS--
"--IT WILL BEAM IT TO THE SOURCE OF THE ENERGY BEAM WHICH NOW CONTROLS IT!
"IN OTHER WORDS...TO ME!
DARKOTH'S APPEARANCE AT NASA WAS MERELY A RUSE--MEANT TO SEND NASA SCURRYING AFTER SIGNS OF EXTERNAL SABOTAGE!
BUT THE SHUTTLE HAD BEEN SABOTAGED YEARS AGO--
--FROM WITHIN!
INCREASE THE POWER FLOW, DEMON!
BUT...THE THING! IT WILL KILL HIM!
KLICK!
WHAT CARE I? FLOOD OUR COLLECTORS! FIRST THE THING DIES--THEN DOCTOR DOOM!
IT IS... DONE, DIABLO!
MAY THE LORD WHO HAS FORSAKEN ME... FORGIVE ME!
CONCERN FOR YOUR FATE--FROM A FELLOW MONSTER! QUITE TOUCHING, EH? BUT THEN, YOU TWO HAVE SO MUCH IN COMMON!
AFTER ALL, ONCE DARKOTH WAS YOUR BEST FR...
DIABLO--
KERWHAM!
SHADDUP!!

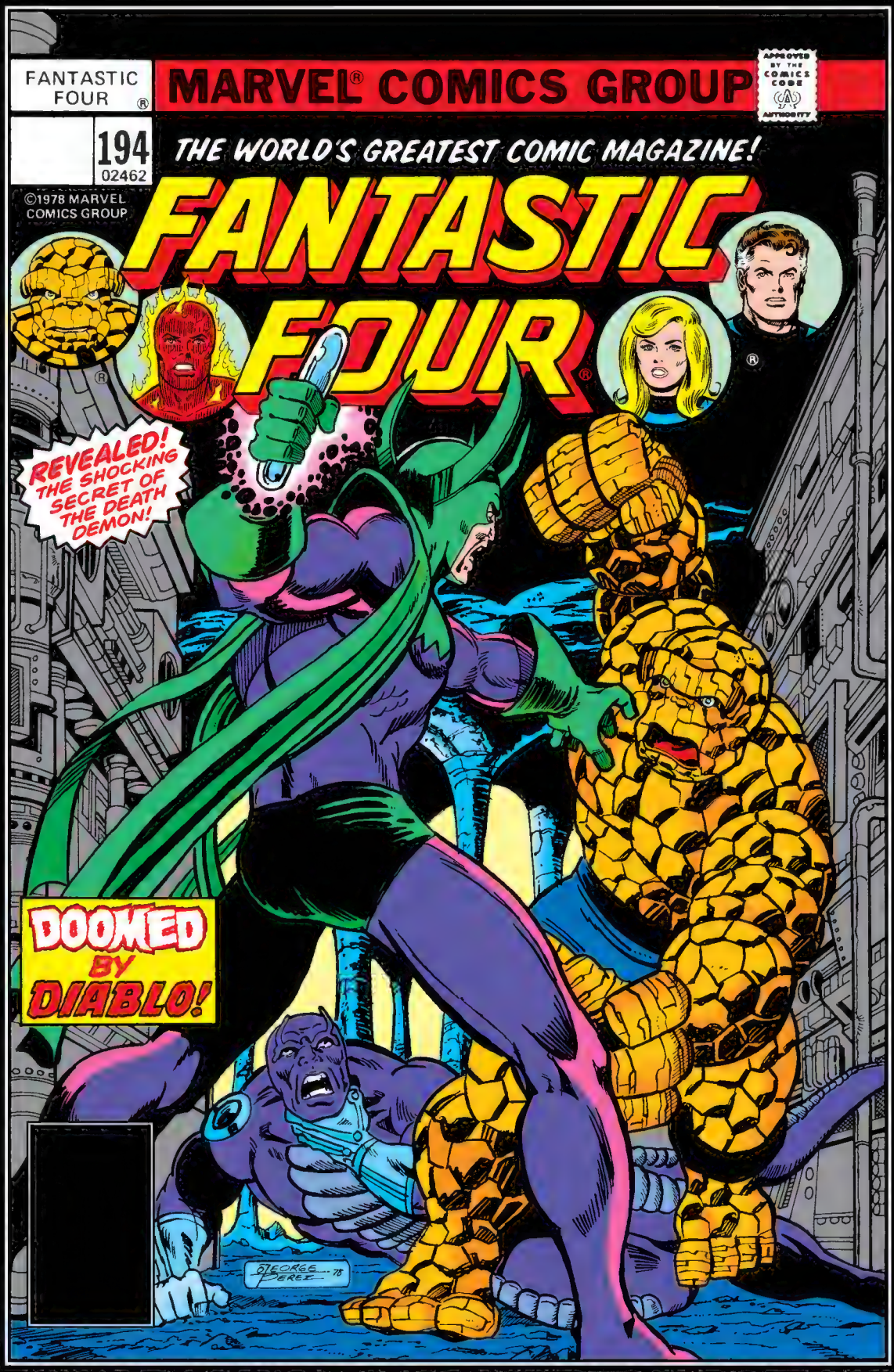

WELL, THAT MADE ME FEEL A LITTLE BETTER! NOW TO--HEY!
THE ENERGY-BEAM'S BEEN CUT OFF! THE CONTROLS ARE WITH ME AGAIN!
I DUNNO WHY-- BUT I AIN'T ABOUT TA LOOK A GIFT HORSE IN THE MOUTH!
BUT ALL IT GIVES ME IS A CHANCE TA COME OUTTA THIS ALIVE!
NASA
UNITED STATES
DIABLO'S BLASTED BEAM TAPPED THE SHUTTLE'S POWER-CELLS, TOO! I AIN'T GOT THE JUICE TA FLY THIS THING!
I GOTTA ORBIT THE BLAMED PLANET AS I LOSE ALTITUDE!
TRY TA SLOW DOWN MY RE-ENTRY SO'S I DON'T BURN UP WHEN I HIT THE ATMOSPHERE--
--AN' BRING THIS BIRD'S NOSE UP LEVEL AS I TRY TA GLIDE 'ER IN FOR A LANDIN'!
YOU AIN'T ASKIN' FER MUCH, ARE YA, GRIMM?
NAH-- JUST THE IMPOS-SIBLE!
NASA
UNITED STATES
AND, AT NASA BASE...
WHAT-- WHAT'S HAPPENING? SOMEBODY TELL ME... PLEASE!!
BEN GRIMM IS THE BEST PILOT I'VE EVER SEEN, MS. MASTERS! HE'S BRINGING THAT BABY IN!!
BEN-- OH, GOD! BEN!

AND, AT THE BUNKER...
YOU ARE A FOOL, DEMON! I KNOW YOU DISOBEYED ME-- CUT THE POWER TO SAVE GRIMM! BUT I HAD POWER ENOUGH... AND, BY REMOVING THE ENERGY-BEAM --
--YOU HAVE DOOMED YOUR CLOSEST FRIEND!
A DEMON WEEPS--
--AS A STRONG MAN FIGHTS FOR HIS LIFE!
VECTORIN' IN ON THE DESERT RIGHT NEAR DIABLO, I HOPE-- BUT I DON'T WANNA COME IN TOO CLOSE, IN CASE...
YEAH, NOT TOO CLOSE!
AWRIGHT PEOPLE--
--HERE COMES THE BARNSTORMIN' BENJAMIN J. GRIMM IN FOR A LANDIN'!
FWEEEEEE
BUT...
NUTHIN'! STRUT'S FROZE! I'M GONNA--
KLIK KLIK
LANDING GEAR
UP
DOWN
SKI-SKA!..
UNITED STATES



NEXT ISSUE: **VENGEANCE!**

DON'T MISS THIS ONE!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FANTASTIC FOUR
REVEALED! THE SHOCKING SECRET OF THE DEATH DEMON!
DOOMED BY DIABLO!
GEORGE PEREZ '78

A brilliant scientist— his best friend— the woman he loves— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! Now they are the FANTASTIC FOUR— and the world will never be the same again!

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FEATURING: DIABLO, MASTER OF ALCHEMY, AND DARKOTH, THE DEATH-DEMON!

VENGEANCE IS MINE!

CAPTAIN SCOTT-- THE FIRE'S OUT IN THE SOLAR SHUTTLE! WE'VE GONE THROUGH THE WRECKAGE, SIR--NOT EVEN BEN GRIMM COULD'VE LIVED THROUGH AN INFERNO LIKE THAT!

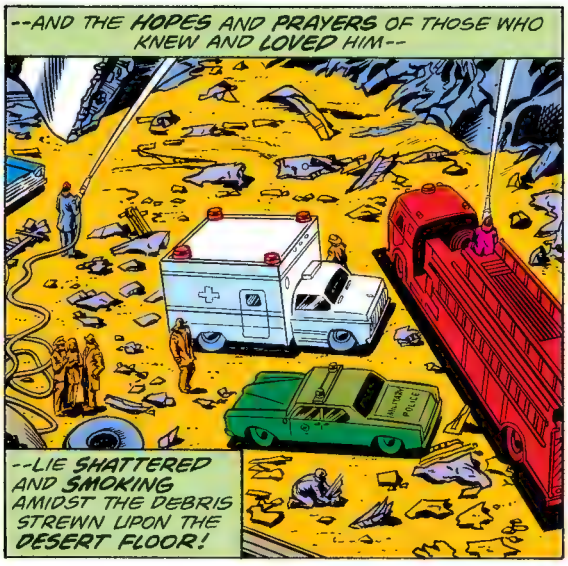
THE THING MUST BE DEAD!

THAT'S OPINION, MISTER--NOT FACT! GO THROUGH THE SHIP AGAIN--AND DON'T STOP LOOKING UNTIL I GIVE THE ORDER!

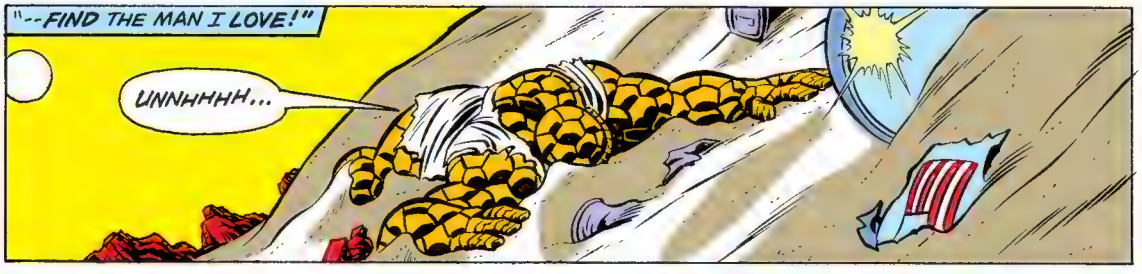
BEN-- OH, MY POOR, DARLING BEN!

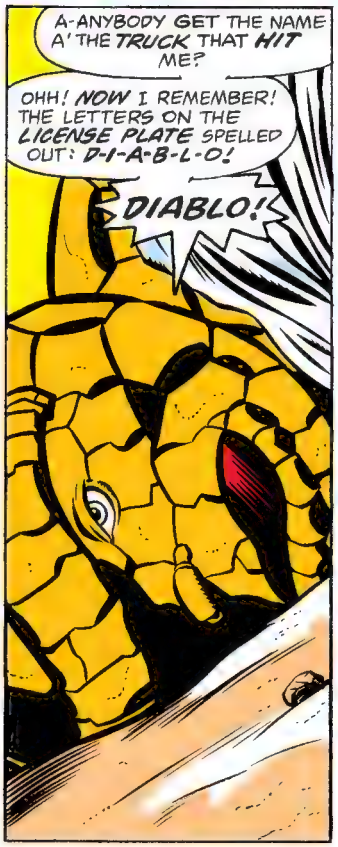
BEN GRIMM, WHO HAD BEEN BORNE ALOFT LIKE AN EAGLE, RETURNED TO EARTH LIKE A FALLING STAR--

C-719

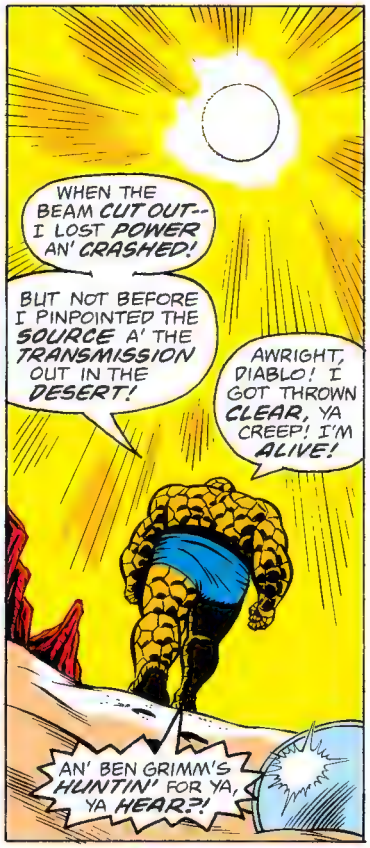

--AND THE HOPES AND PRAYERS OF THOSE WHO KNEW AND LOVED HIM--
--LIE SHATTERED AND SMOKING AMIDST THE DEBRIS STREWN UPON THE DESERT FLOOR!

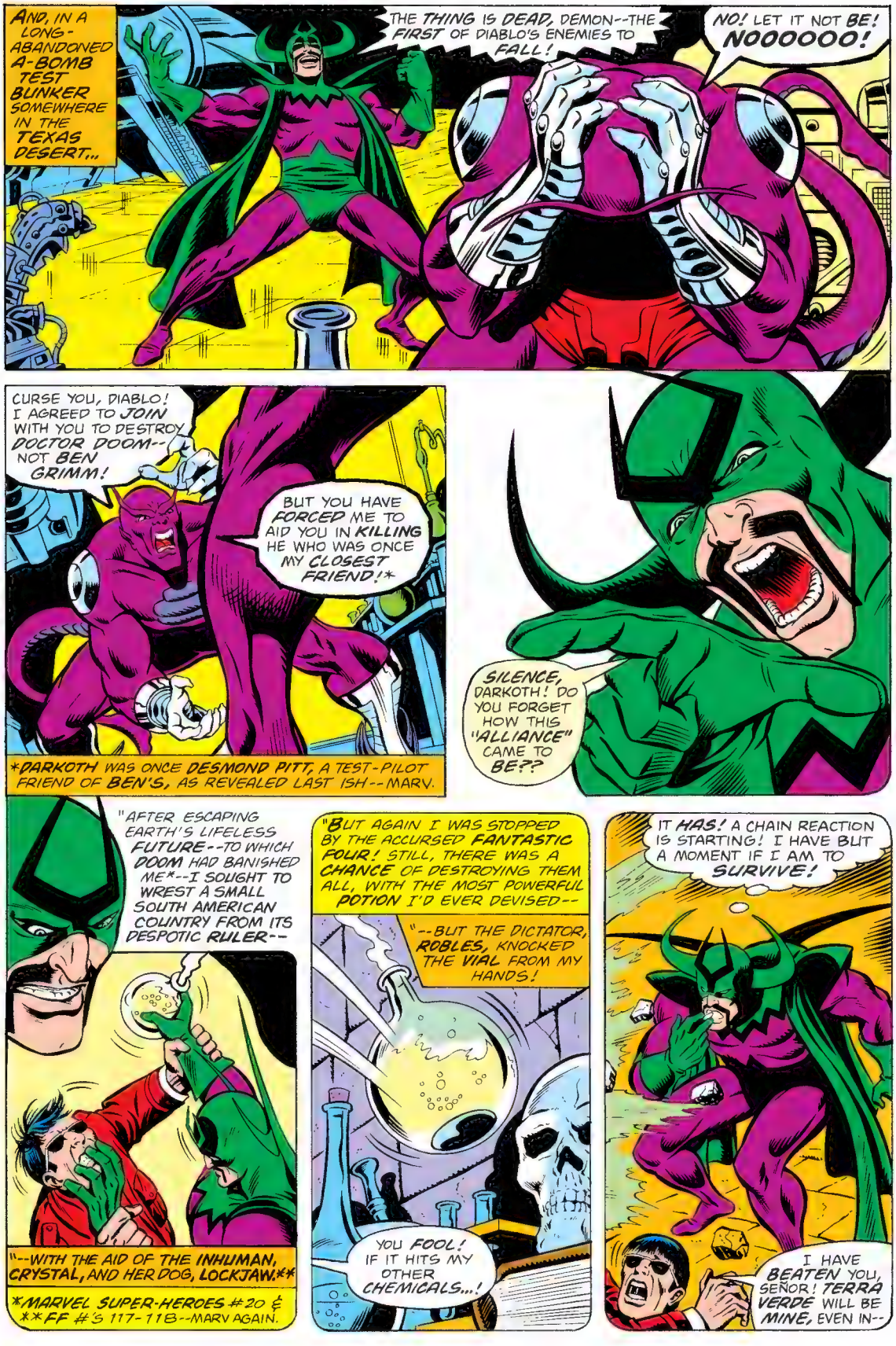
MS. MASTERS--LET ME HAVE ONE OF MY MEN ESCORT YOU BACK TO NASA BASE! THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO HERE!
I HEARD YOU SAY YOU WOULD DISPATCH TROOPS TO SEARCH THE SURROUNDING DESERT, CAPTAIN!
I--I WISH TO BE THERE WHEN THEY--

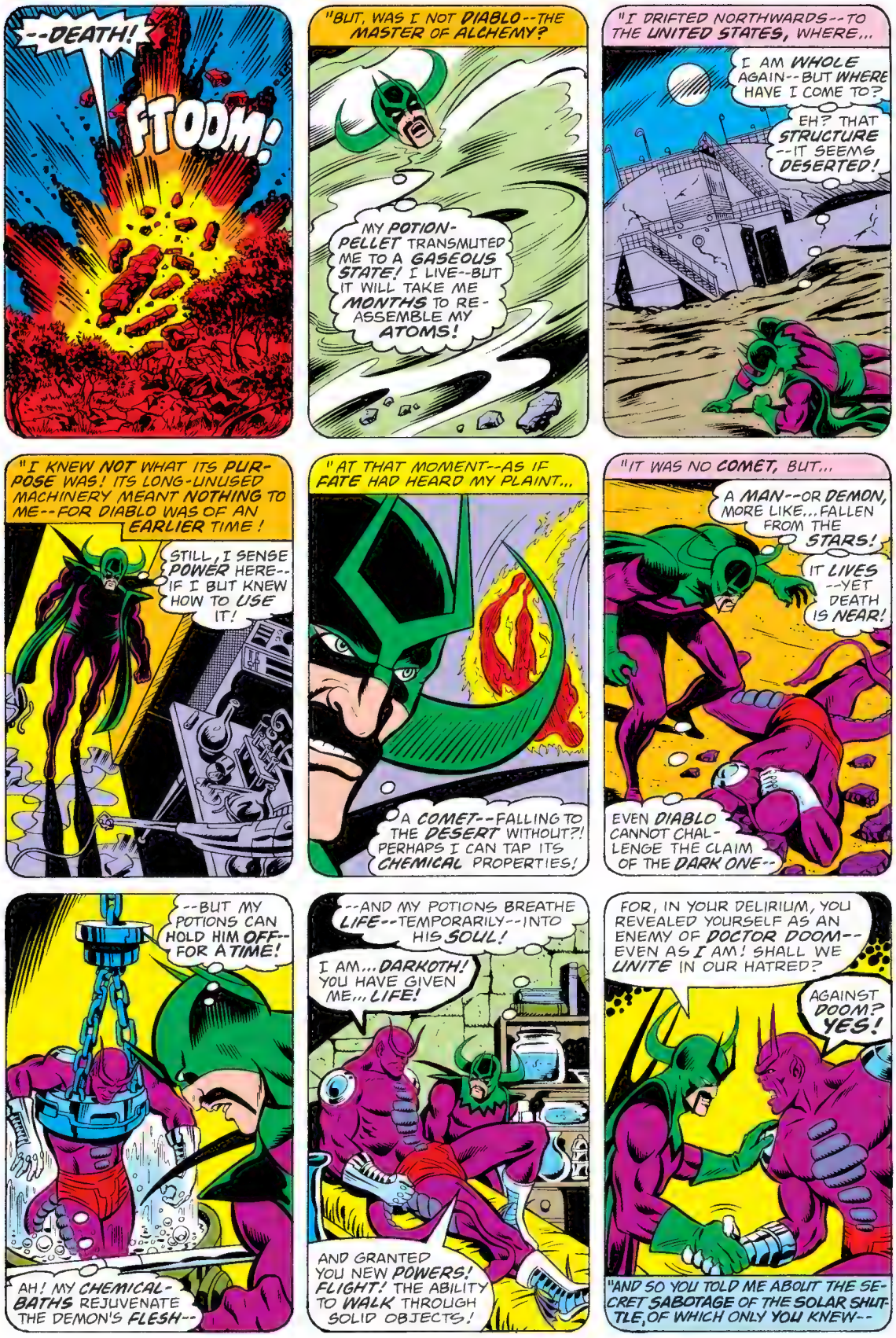

"--FIND THE MAN I LOVE!"
UNNHHHH...

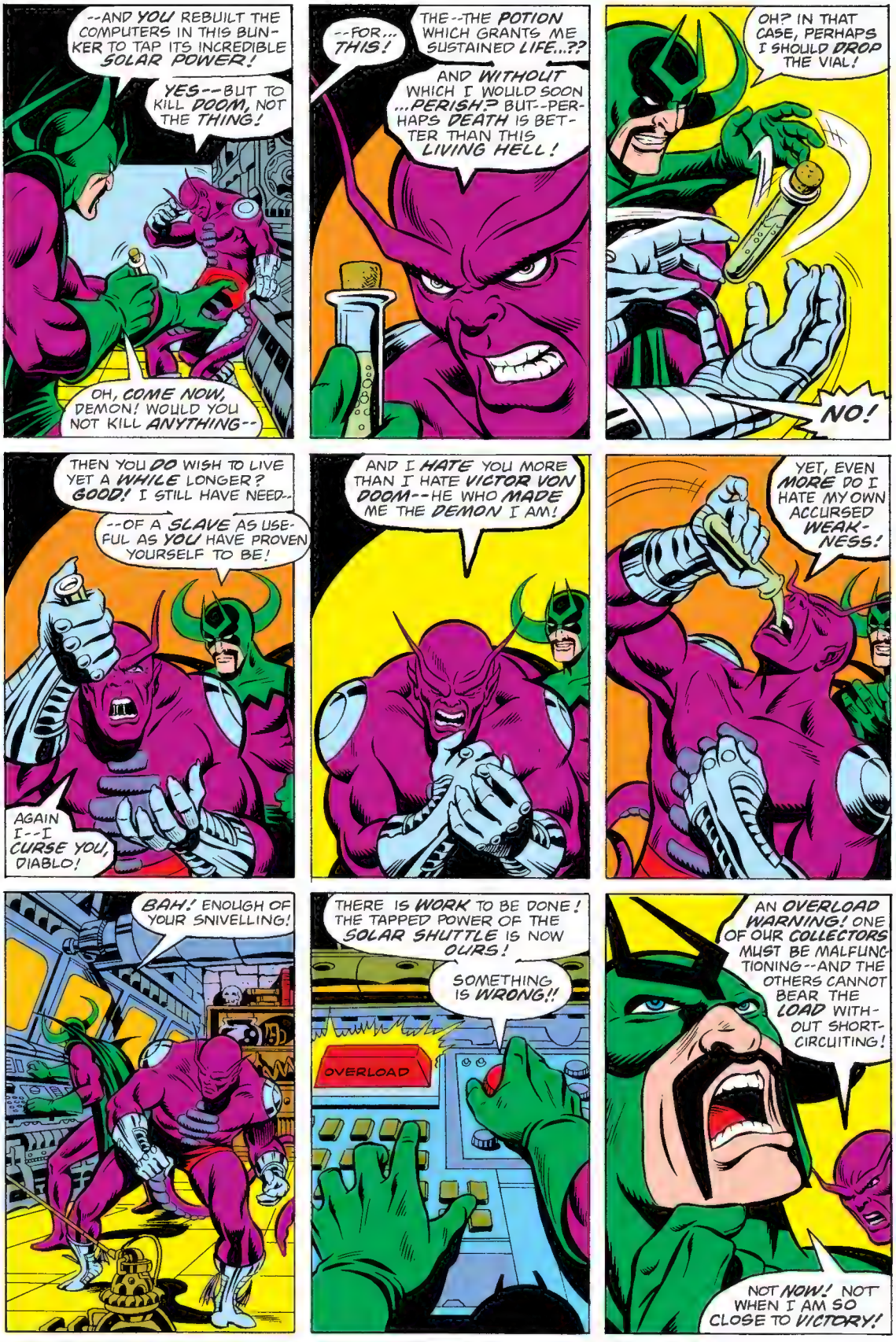

A-ANYBODY GET THE NAME A' THE TRUCK THAT HIT ME?
OHH! NOW I REMEMBER! THE LETTERS ON THE LICENSE PLATE SPELLED OUT: D-I-A-B-L-O!
DIABLO!

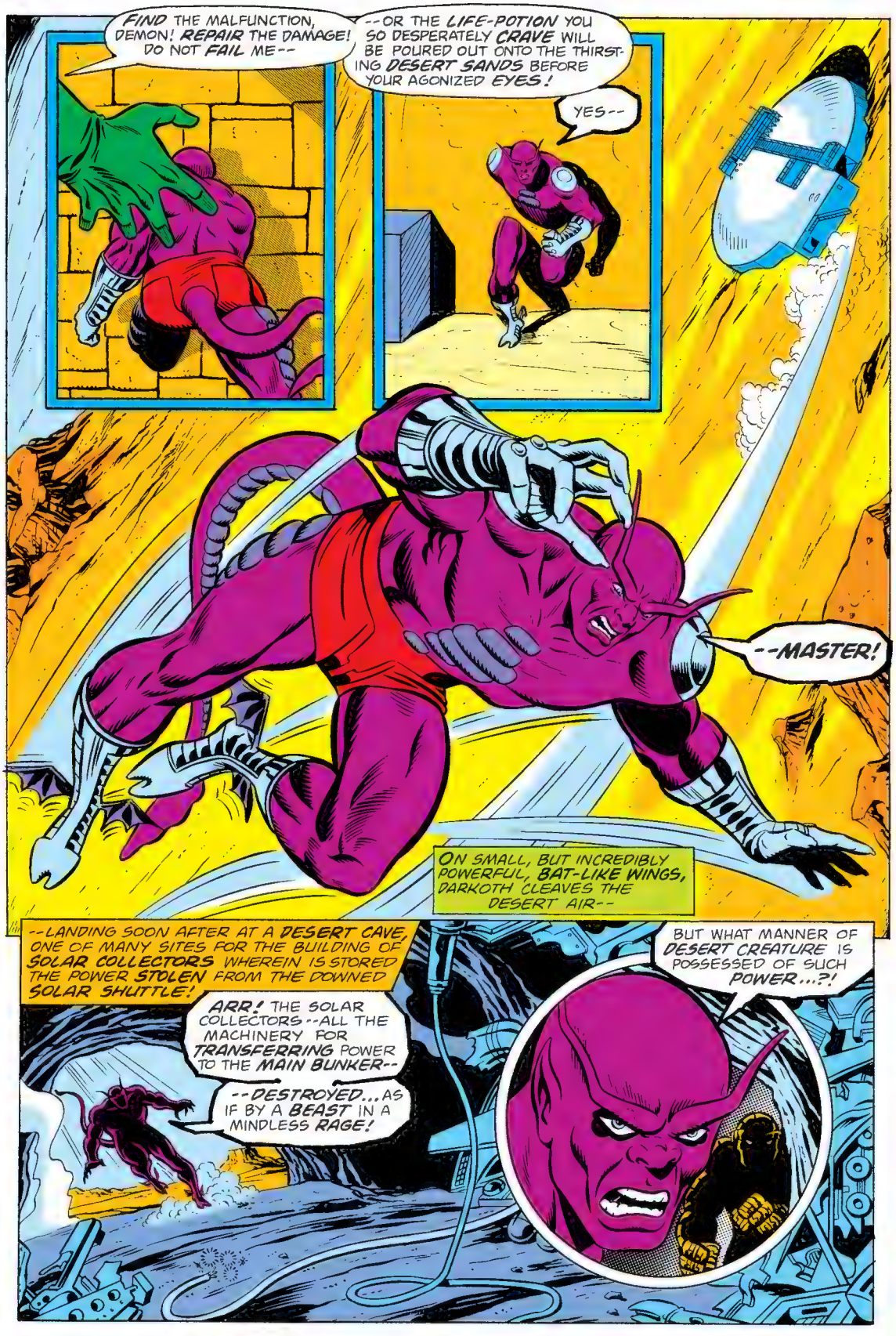
'MEMBER HIM TELLIN' ME SOMETHIN' ABOUT HIS BUDDY DARKOTH --AN' THE SOLAR SHUTTLE BEIN' SABOTAGED SO'S HE COULD TAKE CONTROL OF IT WITH AN ENERGY BEAM FROM EARTH!*
*LAST ISSUE--MARV.

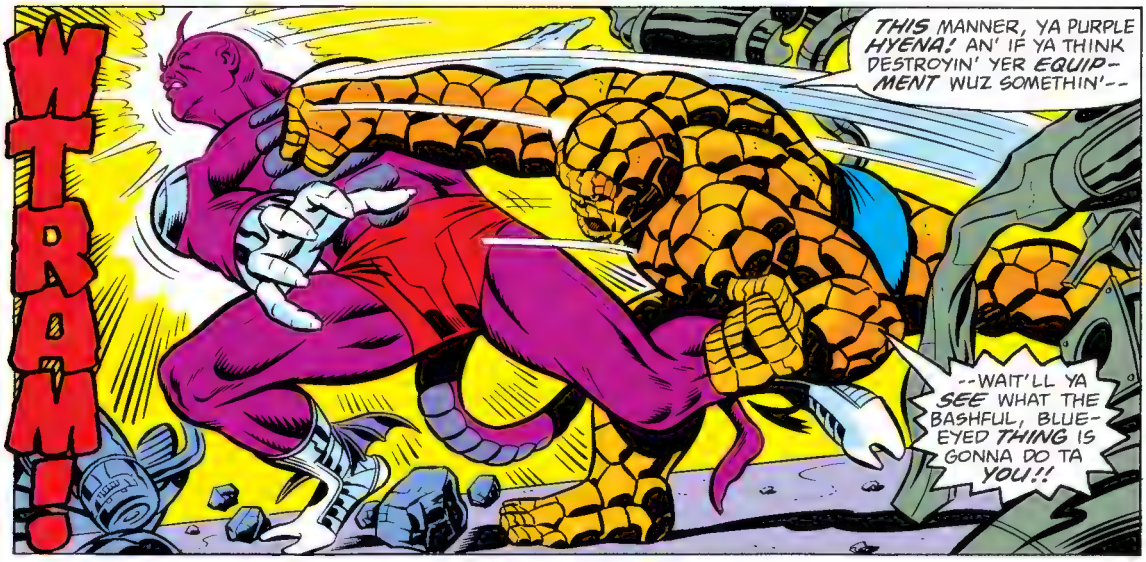

WHEN THE BEAM CUT OUT-- I LOST POWER AN' CRASHED!
BUT NOT BEFORE I PINPOINTED THE SOURCE A' THE TRANSMISSION OUT IN THE DESERT!
AWRIGHT, DIABLO! I GOT THROWN CLEAR, YA CREEP! I'M ALIVE!
AN' BEN GRIMM'S HUNTIN' FOR YA, YA HEAR?!


AND, IN A LONG-ABANDONED A-BOMB TEST BUNKER SOMEWHERE IN THE TEXAS DESERT...
THE THING IS DEAD, DEMON--THE FIRST OF DIABLO'S ENEMIES TO FALL!
NO! LET IT NOT BE! NOOOOOO!
CURSE YOU, DIABLO! I AGREED TO JOIN WITH YOU TO DESTROY DOCTOR DOOM--NOT BEN GRIMM!
BUT YOU HAVE FORCED ME TO AID YOU IN KILLING HE WHO WAS ONCE MY CLOSEST FRIEND!*
*DARKOTH WAS ONCE DESMOND PITT, A TEST-PILOT FRIEND OF BEN'S, AS REVEALED LAST ISH--MARV.
SILENCE, DARKOTH! DO YOU FORGET HOW THIS "ALLIANCE" CAME TO BE??
"AFTER ESCAPING EARTH'S LIFELESS FUTURE--TO WHICH DOOM HAD BANISHED ME*--I SOUGHT TO WREST A SMALL SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRY FROM ITS DESPOTIC RULER--
"--WITH THE AID OF THE INHUMAN, CRYSTAL, AND HER DOG, LOCKJAW.**
*MARVEL SUPER-HEROES #20 & **FF #'S 117-118--MARV AGAIN.
"BUT AGAIN I WAS STOPPED BY THE ACCURSED FANTASTIC FOUR! STILL, THERE WAS A CHANCE OF DESTROYING THEM ALL, WITH THE MOST POWERFUL POTION I'D EVER DEVISED--
"--BUT THE DICTATOR, ROBLES, KNOCKED THE VIAL FROM MY HANDS!
YOU FOOL! IF IT HITS MY OTHER CHEMICALS...!
IT HAS! A CHAIN REACTION IS STARTING! I HAVE BUT A MOMENT IF I AM TO SURVIVE!
I HAVE BEATEN YOU, SEÑOR! TERRA VERDE WILL BE MINE, EVEN IN--

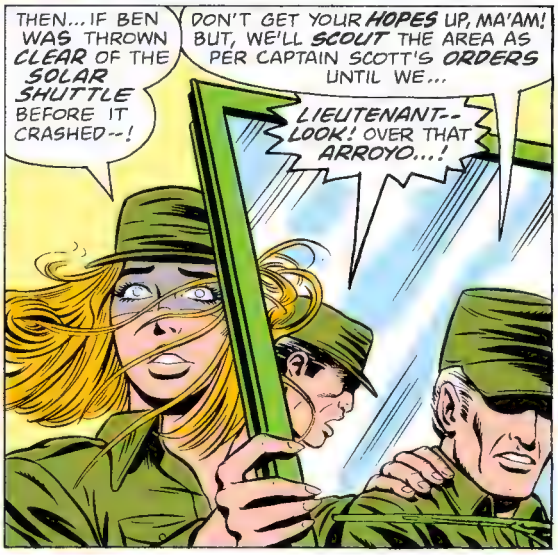

--DEATH!
FTOOM!
"BUT, WAS I NOT DIABLO--THE MASTER OF ALCHEMY?
MY POTION-PELLET TRANSMUTED ME TO A GASEOUS STATE! I LIVE--BUT IT WILL TAKE ME MONTHS TO RE-ASSEMBLE MY ATOMS!
"I DRIFTED NORTHWARDS--TO THE UNITED STATES, WHERE...
I AM WHOLE AGAIN--BUT WHERE HAVE I COME TO?
EH? THAT STRUCTURE --IT SEEMS DESERTED!
"I KNEW NOT WHAT ITS PURPOSE WAS! ITS LONG-UNUSED MACHINERY MEANT NOTHING TO ME--FOR DIABLO WAS OF AN EARLIER TIME!
STILL, I SENSE POWER HERE--IF I BUT KNEW HOW TO USE IT!
"AT THAT MOMENT--AS IF FATE HAD HEARD MY PLAINT...
A COMET--FALLING TO THE DESERT WITHOUT?! PERHAPS I CAN TAP ITS CHEMICAL PROPERTIES!
"IT WAS NO COMET, BUT...
A MAN--OR DEMON, MORE LIKE...FALLEN FROM THE STARS!
IT LIVES --YET DEATH IS NEAR!
EVEN DIABLO CANNOT CHALLENGE THE CLAIM OF THE DARK ONE--
--BUT MY POTIONS CAN HOLD HIM OFF--FOR A TIME!
AH! MY CHEMICAL-BATHS REJUVENATE THE DEMON'S FLESH--
--AND MY POTIONS BREATHE LIFE--TEMPORARILY--INTO HIS SOUL!
I AM...DARKOTH! YOU HAVE GIVEN ME...LIFE!
AND GRANTED YOU NEW POWERS! FLIGHT! THE ABILITY TO WALK THROUGH SOLID OBJECTS!
FOR, IN YOUR DELIRIUM, YOU REVEALED YOURSELF AS AN ENEMY OF DOCTOR DOOM--EVEN AS I AM! SHALL WE UNITE IN OUR HATRED?
AGAINST DOOM? YES!
"AND SO YOU TOLD ME ABOUT THE SECRET SABOTAGE OF THE SOLAR SHUTTLE, OF WHICH ONLY YOU KNEW--


--AND YOU REBUILT THE COMPUTERS IN THIS BUNKER TO TAP ITS INCREDIBLE SOLAR POWER!
YES--BUT TO KILL DOOM, NOT THE THING!
OH, COME NOW, DEMON! WOULD YOU NOT KILL ANYTHING--
--FOR... THIS!
THE--THE POTION WHICH GRANTS ME SUSTAINED LIFE...??
AND WITHOUT WHICH I WOULD SOON ...PERISH? BUT--PERHAPS DEATH IS BETTER THAN THIS LIVING HELL!
OH? IN THAT CASE, PERHAPS I SHOULD DROP THE VIAL!
NO!
THEN YOU DO WISH TO LIVE YET A WHILE LONGER? GOOD! I STILL HAVE NEED--
--OF A SLAVE AS USEFUL AS YOU HAVE PROVEN YOURSELF TO BE!
AGAIN I--I CURSE YOU, DIABLO!
AND I HATE YOU MORE THAN I HATE VICTOR VON DOOM--HE WHO MADE ME THE DEMON I AM!
YET, EVEN MORE DO I HATE MY OWN ACCURSED WEAKNESS!
BAH! ENOUGH OF YOUR SNIVELLING!
THERE IS WORK TO BE DONE! THE TAPPED POWER OF THE SOLAR SHUTTLE IS NOW OURS!
SOMETHING IS WRONG!!
OVERLOAD
AN OVERLOAD WARNING! ONE OF OUR COLLECTORS MUST BE MALFUNCTIONING--AND THE OTHERS CANNOT BEAR THE LOAD WITHOUT SHORT-CIRCUITING!
NOT NOW! NOT WHEN I AM SO CLOSE TO VICTORY!


FIND THE MALFUNCTION, DEMON! REPAIR THE DAMAGE! DO NOT FAIL ME--
--OR THE LIFE-POTION YOU SO DESPERATELY CRAVE WILL BE POURED OUT ONTO THE THIRSTING DESERT SANDS BEFORE YOUR AGONIZED EYES!
YES--
--MASTER!
ON SMALL, BUT INCREDIBLY POWERFUL, BAT-LIKE WINGS, DARKOTH CLEAVES THE DESERT AIR--
--LANDING SOON AFTER AT A DESERT CAVE, ONE OF MANY SITES FOR THE BUILDING OF SOLAR COLLECTORS WHEREIN IS STORED THE POWER STOLEN FROM THE DOWNED SOLAR SHUTTLE!
ARR! THE SOLAR COLLECTORS--ALL THE MACHINERY FOR TRANSFERRING POWER TO THE MAIN BUNKER--
--DESTROYED...AS IF BY A BEAST IN A MINDLESS RAGE!
BUT WHAT MANNER OF DESERT CREATURE IS POSSESSED OF SUCH POWER...?!

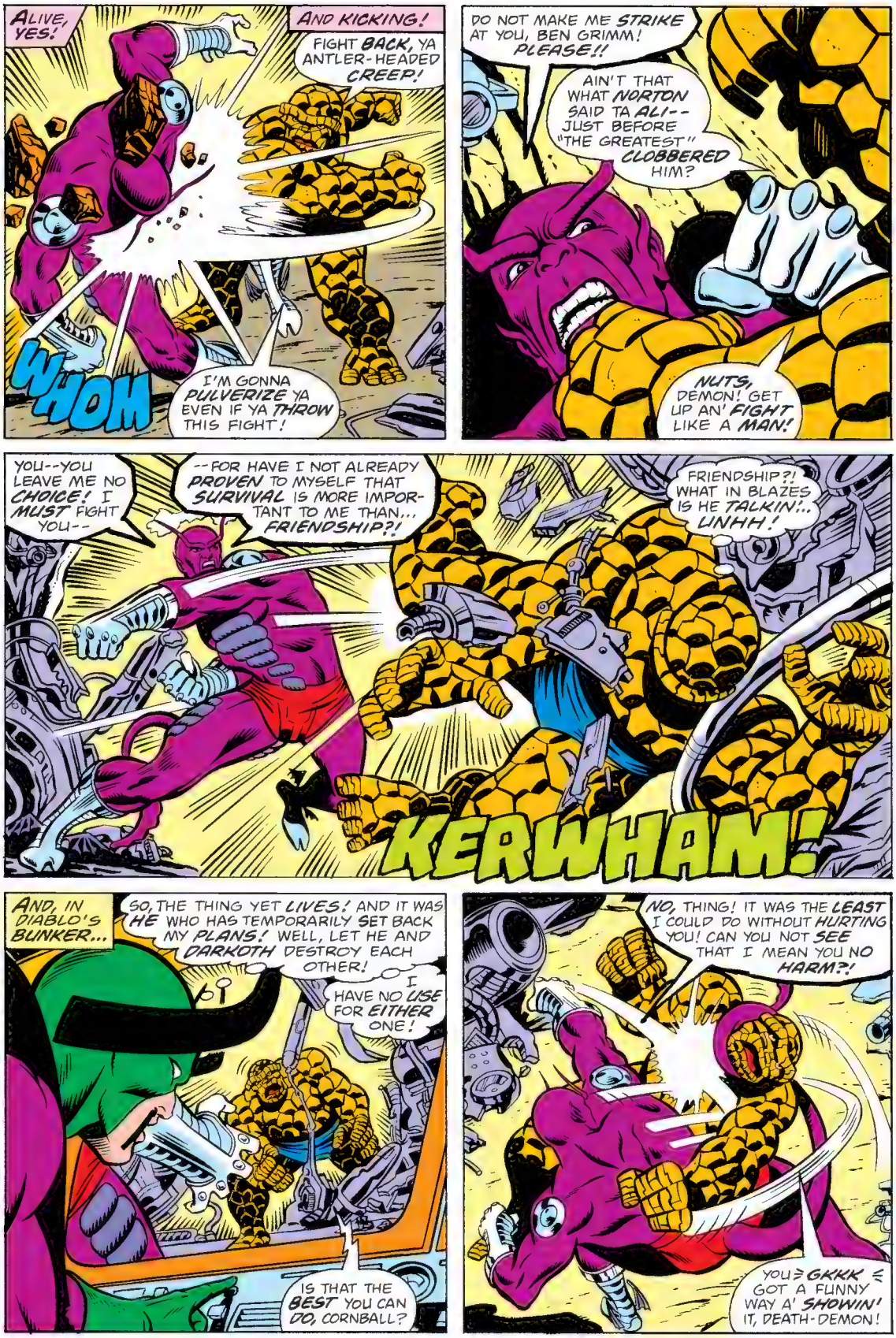

WTRAM!
THIS MANNER, YA PURPLE HYENA! AN' IF YA THINK DESTROYIN' YER EQUIP-MENT WUZ SOMETHIN'--
--WAIT'LL YA SEE WHAT THE BASHFUL, BLUE-EYED THING IS GONNA DO TA YOU!!

CUT TO...
WE'RE ON THE INDIAN RESERVATION NOW, MS. MASTERS! WE HAD A RE-PORT OF AN OBJECT FALLING FROM THE SKY NEAR HERE!

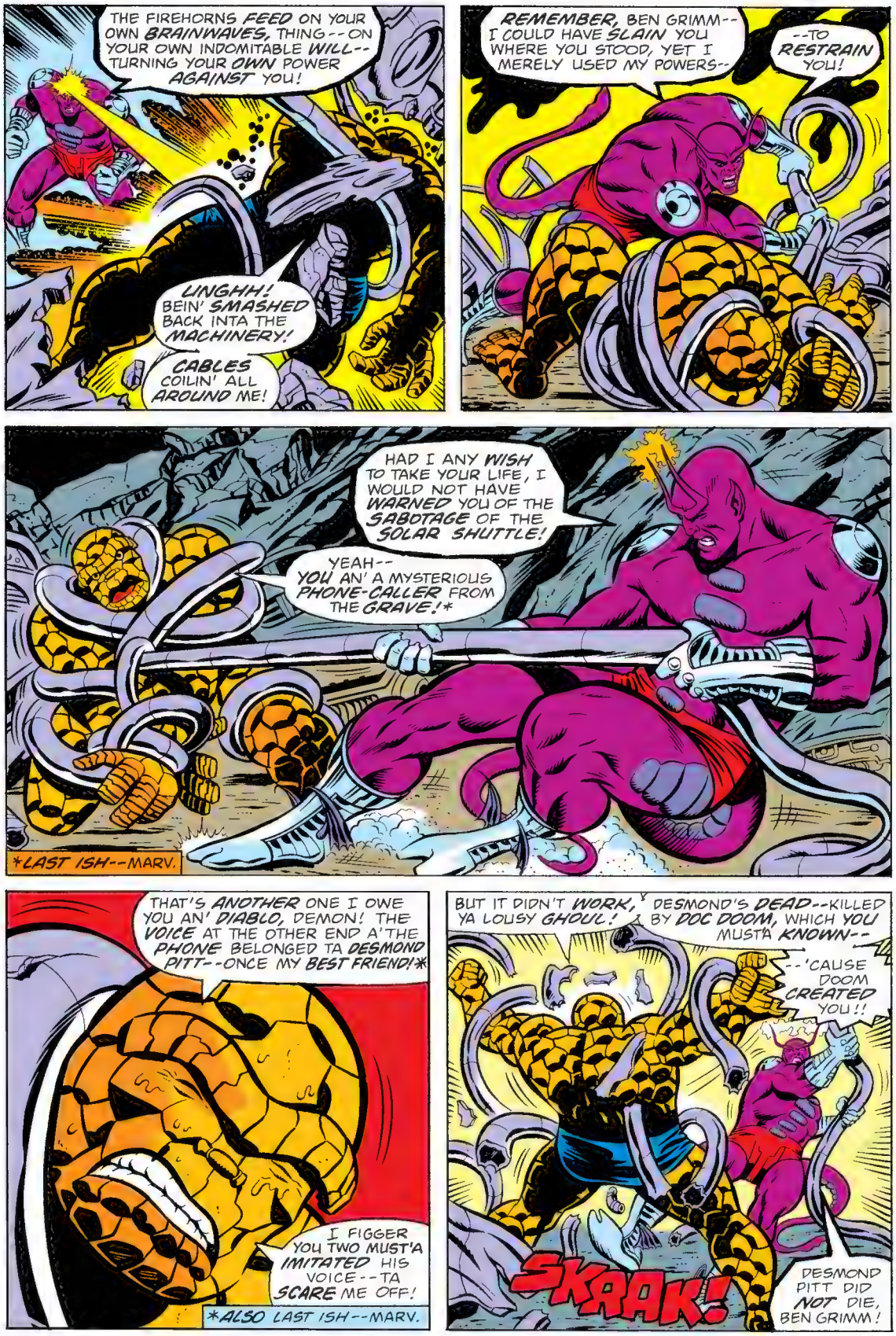

THEN... IF BEN WAS THROWN CLEAR OF THE SOLAR SHUTTLE BEFORE IT CRASHED--!
DON'T GET YOUR HOPES UP, MA'AM! BUT, WE'LL SCOUT THE AREA AS PER CAPTAIN SCOTT'S ORDERS UNTIL WE...
LIEUTENANT-- LOOK! OVER THAT ARROYO...!

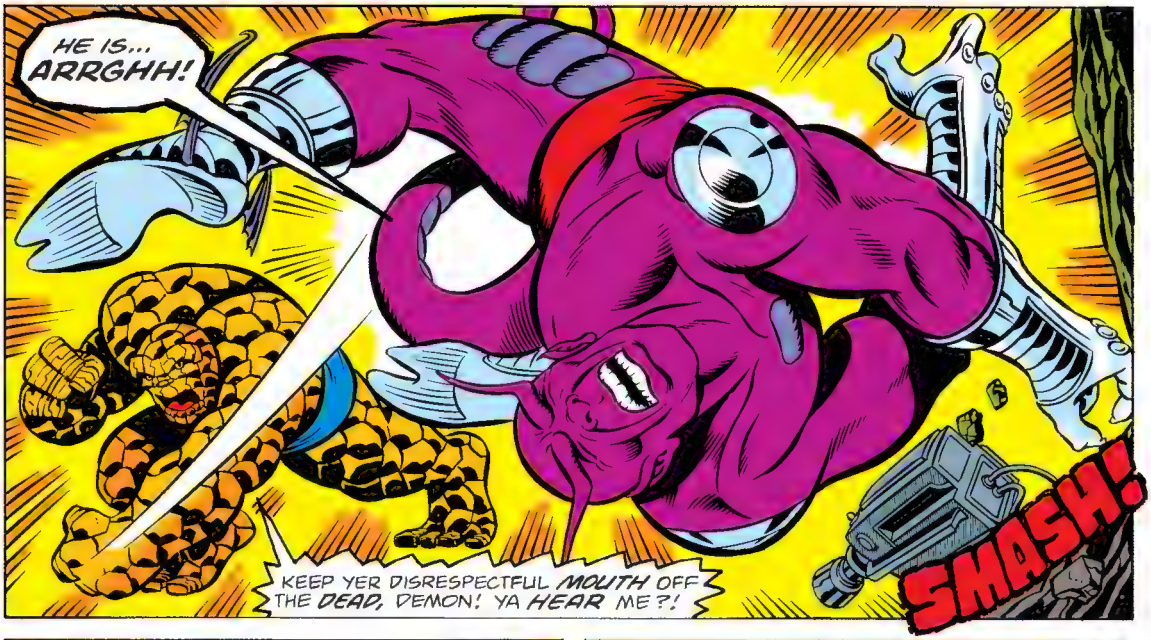
AND, WHEN THE MEN OF NASA LEAP FROM THEIR JEEP...
WHAT IS IT, CORPORAL?!
A SPACE SUIT, SIR-- TORN AND TATTERED--
--BUT DEFINITELY THE ONE WORN BY BEN GRIMM!

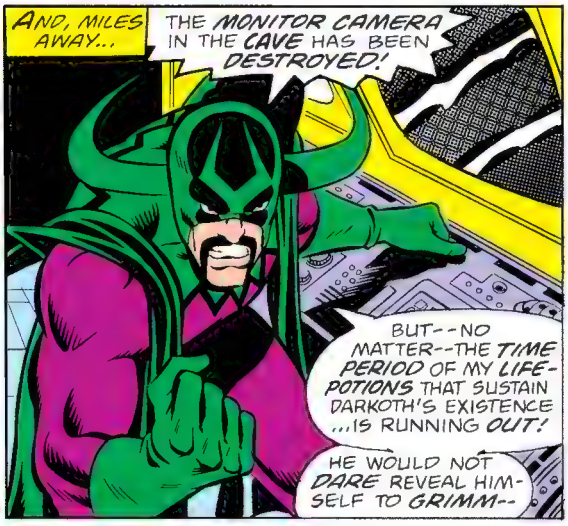
FOOTSTEPS LEADING OUT INTO THE DESERT--BIG ONES! ALL RIGHT, BEN GRIMM DID SURVIVE THE CRASH--
--BUT WHY DID HE WALK AWAY FROM NASA BASE... TOWARD THE OLD A-BOMB TESTING GROUNDS?
WHAT DOES IT MATTER, LIEUTENANT? BEN--MY WONDERFUL BEN--
--IS ALIVE!!


ALIVE, YES!
AND KICKING!
FIGHT BACK, YA ANTLER-HEADED CREEP!
WHOM
I'M GONNA PULVERIZE YA EVEN IF YA THROW THIS FIGHT!
DO NOT MAKE ME STRIKE AT YOU, BEN GRIMM! PLEASE!!
AIN'T THAT WHAT NORTON SAID TA ALI-- JUST BEFORE "THE GREATEST" CLOBBERED HIM?
NUTS, DEMON! GET UP AN' FIGHT LIKE A MAN!
YOU--YOU LEAVE ME NO CHOICE! I MUST FIGHT YOU--
--FOR HAVE I NOT ALREADY PROVEN TO MYSELF THAT SURVIVAL IS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN... FRIENDSHIP?!
FRIENDSHIP?! WHAT IN BLAZES IS HE TALKIN'... UNHH!
KERWHAM!
AND, IN DIABLO'S BUNKER...
SO, THE THING YET LIVES! AND IT WAS HE WHO HAS TEMPORARILY SET BACK MY PLANS! WELL, LET HE AND DARKOTH DESTROY EACH OTHER!
I HAVE NO USE FOR EITHER ONE!
IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN DO, CORNBALL?
NO, THING! IT WAS THE LEAST I COULD DO WITHOUT HURTING YOU! CAN YOU NOT SEE THAT I MEAN YOU NO HARM?!
YOU ≥ GKKK ≤ GOT A FUNNY WAY A' SHOWIN' IT, DEATH-DEMON!

FUNNY? NOTHING ABOUT MY EXISTENCE IS HUMOROUS, BEN GRIMM!
DARKOTH'S LIFE IS ONE OF BLEAK, UNENDING DESPAIR!
TROOM!
YEAH? WELL MAYBE YA SHOULD TRY TICKLIN' YERSELF--WHEN YA GET DONE HURTIN', THAT IS!
'SIDES, YA'LL BE A REAL SCREAM IN BLACK-AN'-BLUE, INSTEAD A' PURPLE!
WRAM!
LOOK INTO MY EYES, BEN GRIMM! CAN YOU SEE IN THEM THE TRUTH WHICH DIABLO'S POTION FORBIDS ME FROM UTTERING WITH MY LIPS?!
YOU KNOW ME, THING! I AM DES...DESM ...ARRRR! THE--THE PAIN! I CANNOT SAY THE NAME!
WHATSAMATTER, PURPLE PEOPLE-EATER? CAT GOT YER TONGUE?
SKRIT!
YOU'D BE A WASHOUT ON "TA TELL THE TRUTH", ANTLERS!
BUT DON'T LET IT WORRY YA--YOU AIN'T GOT YOUR ACT TOGETHER ENUFF TA BE THINKIN' ABOUT PRIME TIME!
HEADS UP, CHUCKLES--IT'S YOUR BALL!!
HAVE YOU SO SOON FORGOTTEN THE POWER OF... THE FIREHORNS?!
FASHT!


THE FIREHORNS FEED ON YOUR OWN BRAINWAVES, THING--ON YOUR OWN INDOMITABLE WILL--TURNING YOUR OWN POWER AGAINST YOU!
UNGHH! BEIN' SMASHED BACK INTA THE MACHINERY!
CABLES COILIN' ALL AROUND ME!
REMEMBER, BEN GRIMM--I COULD HAVE SLAIN YOU WHERE YOU STOOD, YET I MERELY USED MY POWERS--
--TO RESTRAIN YOU!
HAD I ANY WISH TO TAKE YOUR LIFE, I WOULD NOT HAVE WARNED YOU OF THE SABOTAGE OF THE SOLAR SHUTTLE!
YEAH--YOU AN' A MYSTERIOUS PHONE-CALLER FROM THE GRAVE!*
*LAST ISH--MARV.
THAT'S ANOTHER ONE I OWE YOU AN' DIABLO, DEMON! THE VOICE AT THE OTHER END A'THE PHONE BELONGED TA DESMOND PITT--ONCE MY BEST FRIEND!*
I FIGGER YOU TWO MUST'A IMITATED HIS VOICE--TA SCARE ME OFF!
*ALSO LAST ISH--MARV.
BUT IT DIDN'T WORK, YA LOUSY GHOUL!
DESMOND'S DEAD--KILLED BY DOC DOOM, WHICH YOU MUST'A KNOWN--
--'CAUSE DOOM CREATED YOU!!
SKRAK!
DESMOND PITT DID NOT DIE, BEN GRIMM!

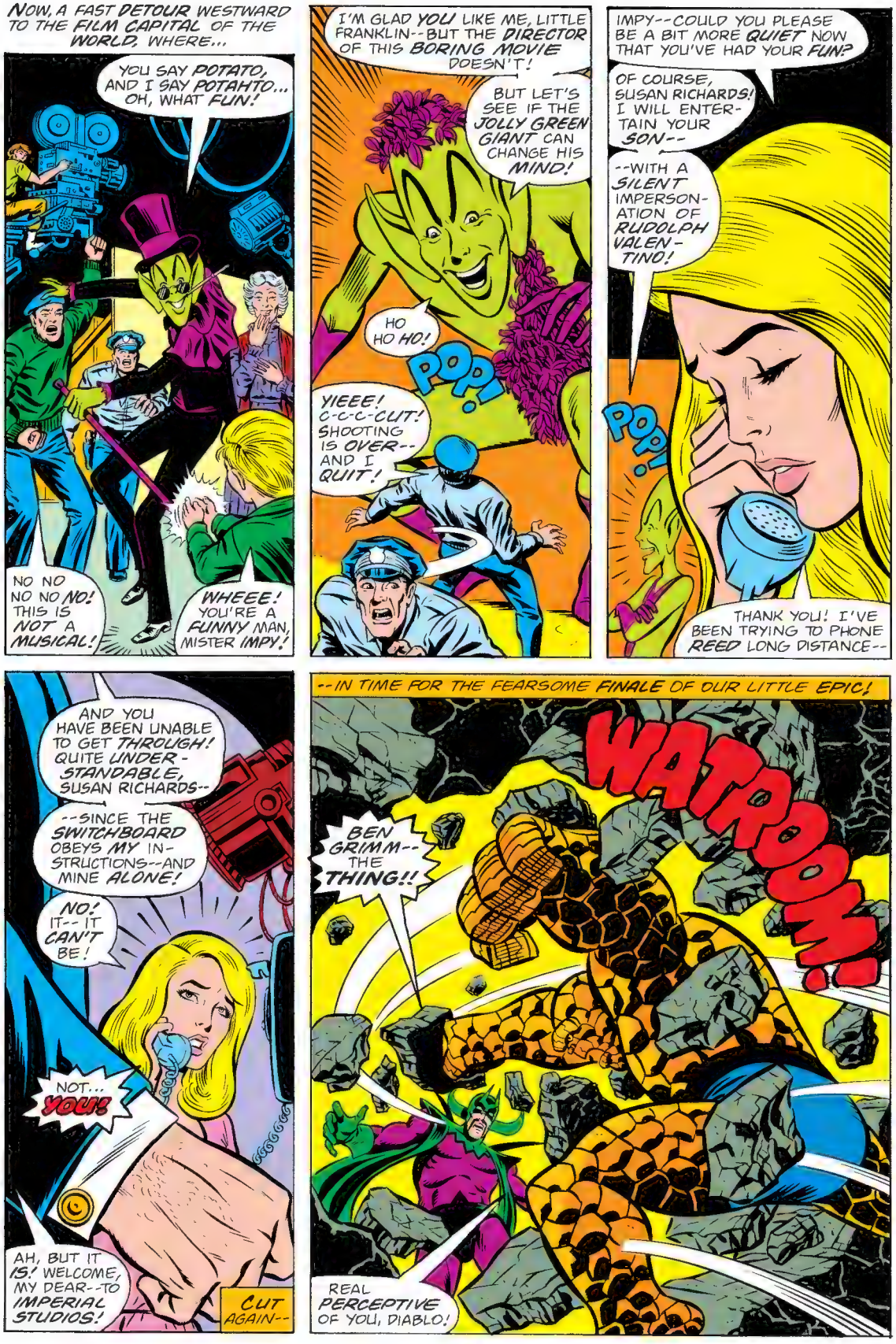

HE IS... ARRGHH!
KEEP YER DISRESPECTFUL MOUTH OFF THE DEAD, DEMON! YA HEAR ME?!
SMASH!

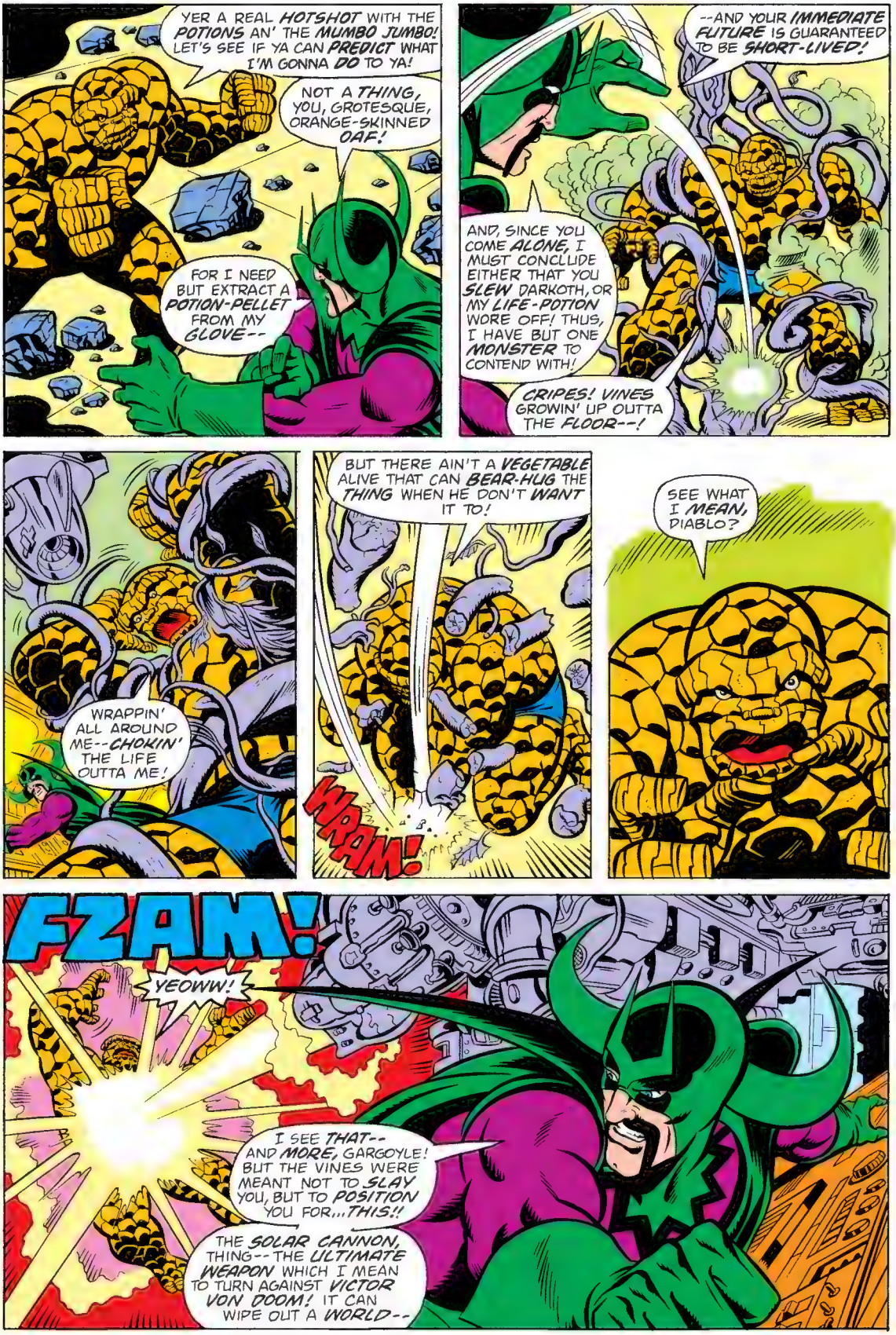

AND, MILES AWAY...
THE MONITOR CAMERA IN THE CAVE HAS BEEN DESTROYED!
BUT--NO MATTER--THE TIME PERIOD OF MY LIFE-POTIONS THAT SUSTAIN DARKOTH'S EXISTENCE ...IS RUNNING OUT!
HE WOULD NOT DARE REVEAL HIMSELF TO GRIMM--

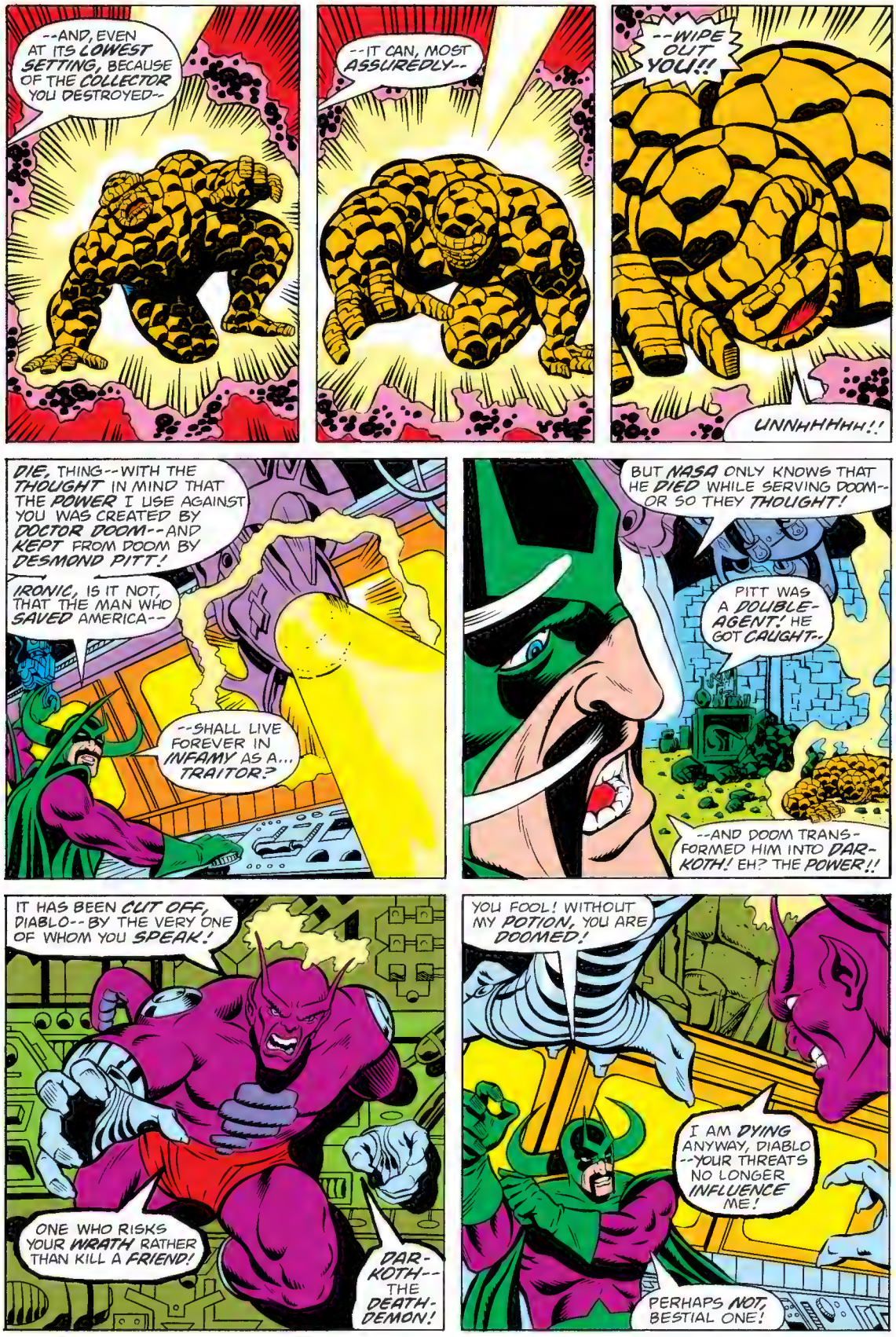
"--IF HE WISHES TO GO ON LIVING!"
GET UP, DEMON! MENTION DESMOND'S NAME AGAIN--
--SO'S I CAN CLOBBER YA WITHOUT MY CONSCIENCE BOTHERIN' ME!

HEY?! WHAT GIVES?! YER TREMBLIN' LIKE A LEAF--AN' WEAK AS A KITTEN ALLUVA SUDDEN!
IS THIS SOME KINDA TRICK--?!

IT...IS NO TRICK, BEN! YOU CAN CALL IT... WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS! DIABLO'S POTION IS WEARING OFF! I WILL... DIE IF IT IS NOT SOON RENEWED!
BUT...THE PAIN...CAN NO LONGER KEEP ME FROM ...REVEALING MYSELF TO YOU!
I AM ≥ARRGHH≤ DESMOND PITT, BEN GRIMM! YOUR ≥ARRGHH≤ FRIEND!

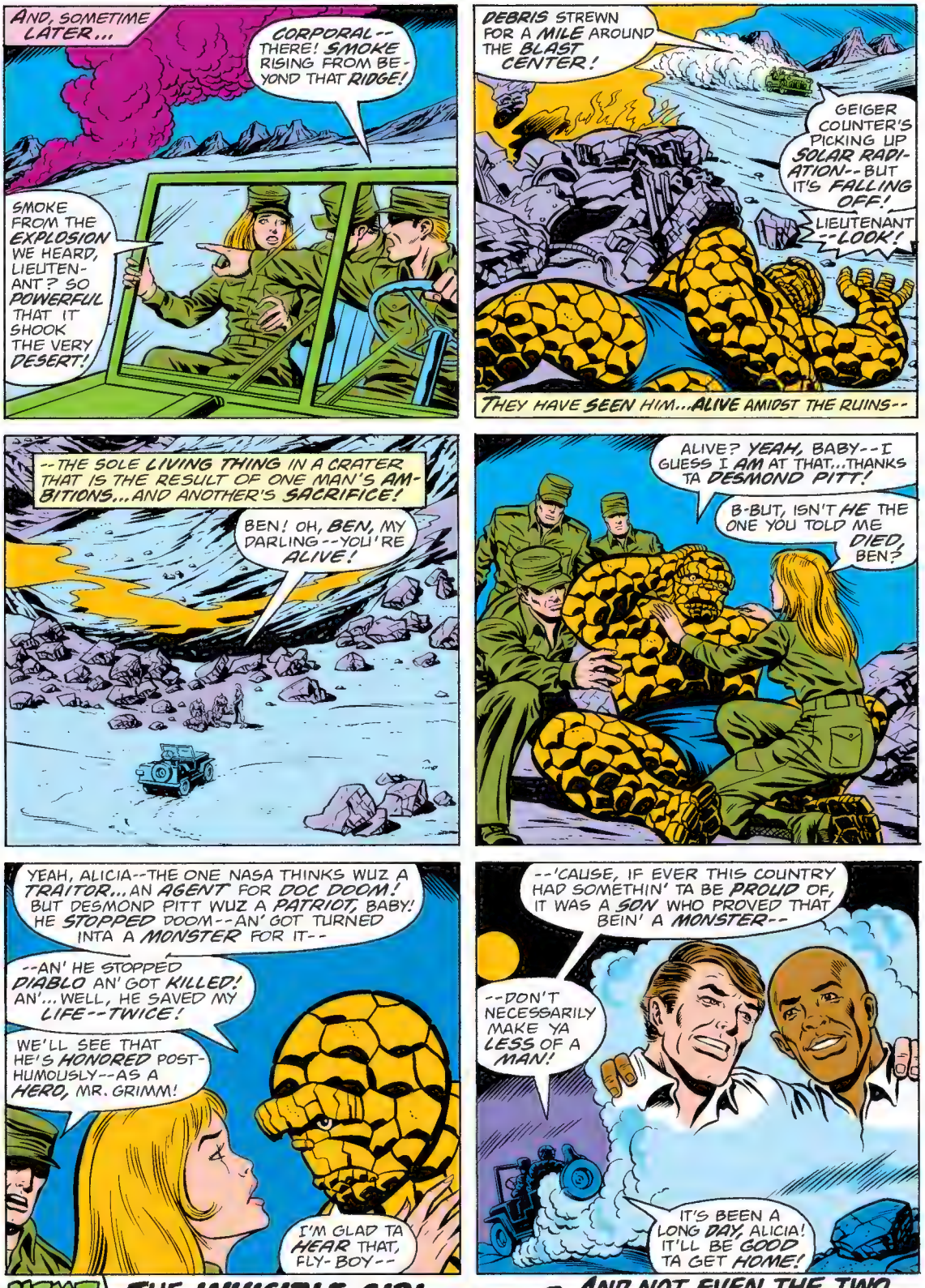

NOW, A FAST DETOUR WESTWARD TO THE FILM CAPITAL OF THE WORLD, WHERE...
YOU SAY POTATO, AND I SAY POTAHTO... OH, WHAT FUN!
NO NO NO NO NO! THIS IS NOT A MUSICAL!
WHEEE! YOU'RE A FUNNY MAN, MISTER IMPY!
I'M GLAD YOU LIKE ME, LITTLE FRANKLIN--BUT THE DIRECTOR OF THIS BORING MOVIE DOESN'T!
BUT LET'S SEE IF THE JOLLY GREEN GIANT CAN CHANGE HIS MIND!
HO HO HO!
POP!
YIEEE! C-C-C-CUT! SHOOTING IS OVER--AND I QUIT!
IMPY--COULD YOU PLEASE BE A BIT MORE QUIET NOW THAT YOU'VE HAD YOUR FUN?
OF COURSE, SUSAN RICHARDS! I WILL ENTERTAIN YOUR SON--
--WITH A SILENT IMPERSONATION OF RUDOLPH VALENTINO!
POP!
THANK YOU! I'VE BEEN TRYING TO PHONE REED LONG DISTANCE--
AND YOU HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO GET THROUGH! QUITE UNDERSTANDABLE, SUSAN RICHARDS--
--SINCE THE SWITCHBOARD OBEYS MY INSTRUCTIONS--AND MINE ALONE!
NO! IT-- IT CAN'T BE!
NOT... YOU!
AH, BUT IT IS! WELCOME, MY DEAR--TO IMPERIAL STUDIOS!
CUT AGAIN--
--IN TIME FOR THE FEARSOME FINALE OF OUR LITTLE EPIC!
WATROOM!
BEN GRIMM--THE THING!!
REAL PERCEPTIVE OF YOU, DIABLO!


YER A REAL HOTSHOT WITH THE POTIONS AN' THE MUMBO JUMBO! LET'S SEE IF YA CAN PREDICT WHAT I'M GONNA DO TO YA!
NOT A THING, YOU, GROTESQUE, ORANGE-SKINNED OAF!
FOR I NEED BUT EXTRACT A POTION-PELLET FROM MY GLOVE--
--AND YOUR IMMEDIATE FUTURE IS GUARANTEED TO BE SHORT-LIVED!
AND, SINCE YOU COME ALONE, I MUST CONCLUDE EITHER THAT YOU SLEW DARKOTH, OR MY LIFE-POTION WORE OFF! THUS, I HAVE BUT ONE MONSTER TO CONTEND WITH!
CRIPES! VINES GROWIN' UP OUTTA THE FLOOR--!
WRAPPIN' ALL AROUND ME--CHOKIN' THE LIFE OUTTA ME!
BUT THERE AIN'T A VEGETABLE ALIVE THAT CAN BEAR-HUG THE THING WHEN HE DON'T WANT IT TO!
KRAM!
SEE WHAT I MEAN, DIABLO?
FZAM!
YEOWW!
I SEE THAT-- AND MORE, GARGOYLE! BUT THE VINES WERE MEANT NOT TO SLAY YOU, BUT TO POSITION YOU FOR...THIS!!
THE SOLAR CANNON, THING-- THE ULTIMATE WEAPON WHICH I MEAN TO TURN AGAINST VICTOR VON DOOM! IT CAN WIPE OUT A WORLD--


--AND, EVEN AT ITS LOWEST SETTING, BECAUSE OF THE COLLECTOR YOU DESTROYED--
--IT CAN, MOST ASSUREDLY--
--WIPE OUT YOU!!
UNNHHHHH!!
DIE, THING--WITH THE THOUGHT IN MIND THAT THE POWER I USE AGAINST YOU WAS CREATED BY DOCTOR DOOM--AND KEPT FROM DOOM BY DESMOND PITT!
IRONIC, IS IT NOT, THAT THE MAN WHO SAVED AMERICA--
--SHALL LIVE FOREVER IN INFAMY AS A... TRAITOR?
BUT NASA ONLY KNOWS THAT HE DIED WHILE SERVING DOOM--OR SO THEY THOUGHT!
PITT WAS A DOUBLE-AGENT! HE GOT CAUGHT--
--AND DOOM TRANSFORMED HIM INTO DARKOTH! EH? THE POWER!!
IT HAS BEEN CUT OFF, DIABLO--BY THE VERY ONE OF WHOM YOU SPEAK!
ONE WHO RISKS YOUR WRATH RATHER THAN KILL A FRIEND!
DARKOTH--THE DEATH-DEMON!
YOU FOOL! WITHOUT MY POTION, YOU ARE DOOMED!
I AM DYING ANYWAY, DIABLO--YOUR THREATS NO LONGER INFLUENCE ME!
PERHAPS NOT, BESTIAL ONE!

BUT, WHERE THREATS FAIL--THE MYSTIC, ALCHEMICAL POTIONS OF DIABLO SHALL SUCCEED!
THIS ONE SPEEDS UP YOUR DESTRUCTION, DEMON! YOU DRAW YOUR LAST BREATH!
ARRGHH!
NOW, DESMOND PITT TRULY THROWS OFF THIS MORTAL COIL!
YOU DIE--GRIMM DIES--AND DOOM FOLLOWS QUICKLY AFTER!
N-NO...
IF--IF I AM TO DIE, LET IT BE WITH HONOR! LET ME AT LAST REDEEM MYSELF IN THE EYES OF MY COUNTRY--MY FRIENDS--MY SON WHO KNOWS ME NOT!
YOU ARE RIGHT, DIABLO! DEATH COMES FOR ME--
--BUT I WILL NOT BE GOING ALONE!!
N-NO! KEEP BACK! YOU--YOU HAVE NOT THE STRENGTH--!
STRENGTH IS ALL I HAVE LEFT, MASTER OF ALCHEMY!
THE STRENGTH OF THE DAMNED!!
KER-
WHAM!

UNHH! MY HEAD FEELS LIKE A BLASTED FOOT-BALL! H-HEY--?
O--
--DESMOND!
FLEE, BEN! THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SOLAR CANNON HAS CAUSED A MAS-SIVE CHAIN REACTION!
THIS ENTIRE BUNKER IS BEING EXPOSED TO LETHAL DOSES OF SOLAR RADIATION!
I AIN'T LEAVIN' YA, DESMOND! I OWE YA, BUDDY--FOR SAVIN' MY LIFE--UNGHH!
WOK!
THEN DO NOT THROW IT AWAY IN VAIN, BEN! REPAY ME--
--BY ONE DAY FINDING MY SON ...AND BY TELLING HIM THE TRUTH ABOUT HIS FATHER--THAT DESMOND PITT WAS NO DEMON...BUT A MAN!
NOW GO, BEN! THE FORCES UNLEASHED HERE--
--ARE BUILDING BEYOND ANYONE'S CONTROL...ABOUT TO FLARE UP--TO--
--EXPLODE!
DESMOND! FOR THE LOVE A' MIKE--NOOOOOOO...!
BUT THERE IS NOT MUCH BEN GRIMM CAN DO NOW--SAVE RUN!


AND, SOMETIME LATER...
CORPORAL--THERE! SMOKE RISING FROM BEYOND THAT RIDGE!
SMOKE FROM THE EXPLOSION WE HEARD, LIEUTENANT? SO POWERFUL THAT IT SHOOK THE VERY DESERT!
DEBRIS STREWN FOR A MILE AROUND THE BLAST CENTER!
GEIGER COUNTER'S PICKING UP SOLAR RADIATION--BUT IT'S FALLING OFF!
LIEUTENANT--LOOK!
THEY HAVE SEEN HIM...ALIVE AMIDST THE RUINS--
--THE SOLE LIVING THING IN A CRATER THAT IS THE RESULT OF ONE MAN'S AMBITIONS...AND ANOTHER'S SACRIFICE!
BEN! OH, BEN, MY DARLING--YOU'RE ALIVE!
ALIVE? YEAH, BABY--I GUESS I AM AT THAT...THANKS TA DESMOND PITT!
B-BUT, ISN'T HE THE ONE YOU TOLD ME DIED, BEN?
YEAH, ALICIA--THE ONE NASA THINKS WUZ A TRAITOR...AN AGENT FOR DOC DOOM! BUT DESMOND PITT WUZ A PATRIOT, BABY! HE STOPPED DOOM--AN' GOT TURNED INTA A MONSTER FOR IT--
--AN' HE STOPPED DIABLO AN' GOT KILLED! AN'...WELL, HE SAVED MY LIFE--TWICE!
WE'LL SEE THAT HE'S HONORED POSTHUMOUSLY--AS A HERO, MR. GRIMM!
I'M GLAD TA HEAR THAT, FLY-BOY--
--'CAUSE, IF EVER THIS COUNTRY HAD SOMETHIN' TA BE PROUD OF, IT WAS A SON WHO PROVED THAT BEIN' A MONSTER--
--DON'T NECESSARILY MAKE YA LESS OF A MAN!
IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY, ALICIA! IT'LL BE GOOD TA GET HOME!

NEXT ISSUE: THE *INVISIBLE GIRL* AND--THE *SAVAGE SUB-MARINER*! AND NOT EVEN THE TWO OF THEM CAN STOP--THE **RETRIEVERS!**

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PÉREZ+
THE INVISIBLE GIRL AND THE SAVAGE SUB-MARINER!
HELPLESS AGAINST THE UNLEASHED FURY OF THE
RAMPAGING RETRIEVERS!

A brilliant scientist— his best friend— the woman he loves— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human!
MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! Now they are the FANTASTIC FOUR— and the world will never be the same again!

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BEWARE THE RAVAGING RETRIEVERS!

CO-STARRING THE SAVAGE... SUB-MARINER!

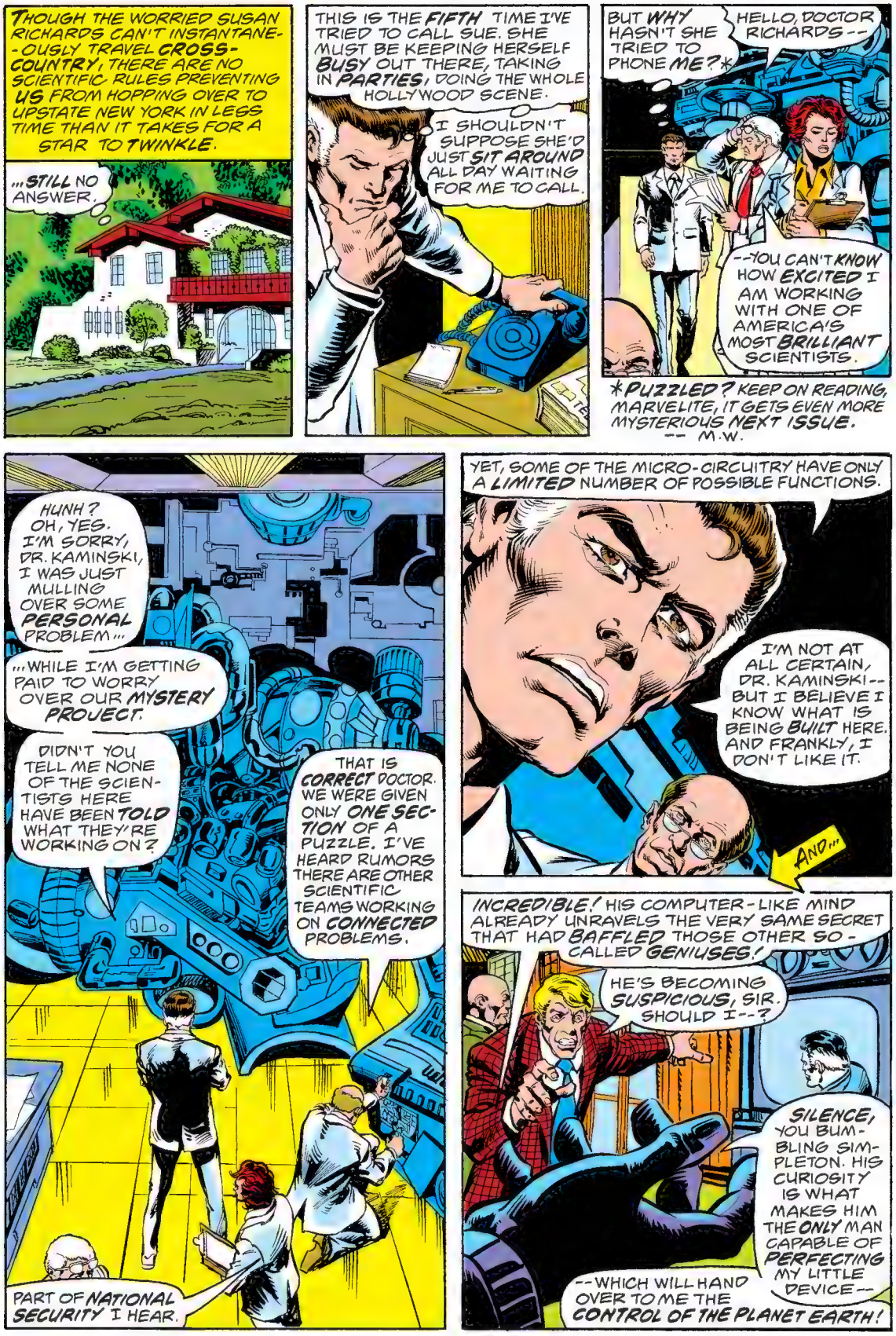
HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA...

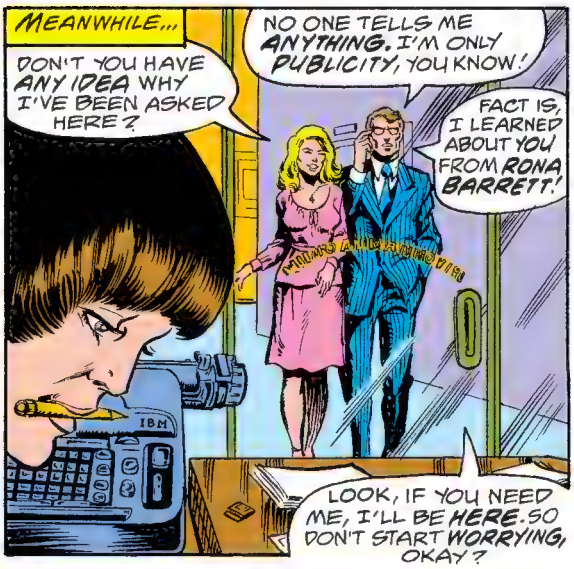
OH, REED, REED WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER? I NEED YOU TO REASSURE ME...

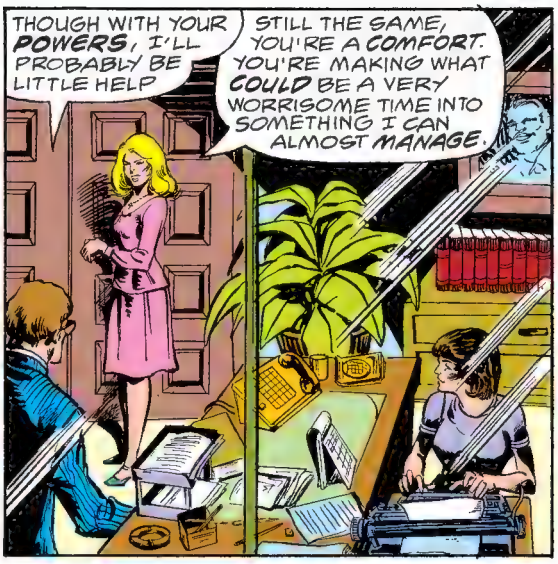
...TO TELL ME THAT I HADN'T MADE A MISTAKE COMING HERE TO HOLLYWOOD. TELL ME THAT YOU LOVE ME...THAT YOU MISS ME.

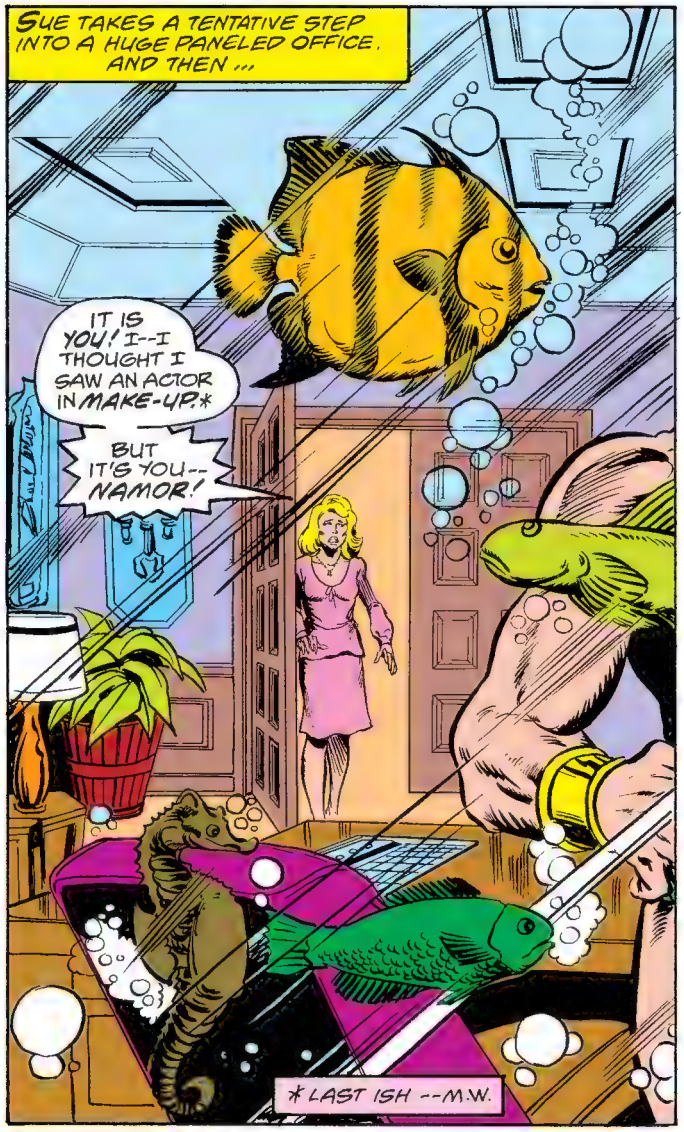
REED, PLEASE, PLEASE--I NEED TO SPEAK WITH YOU.

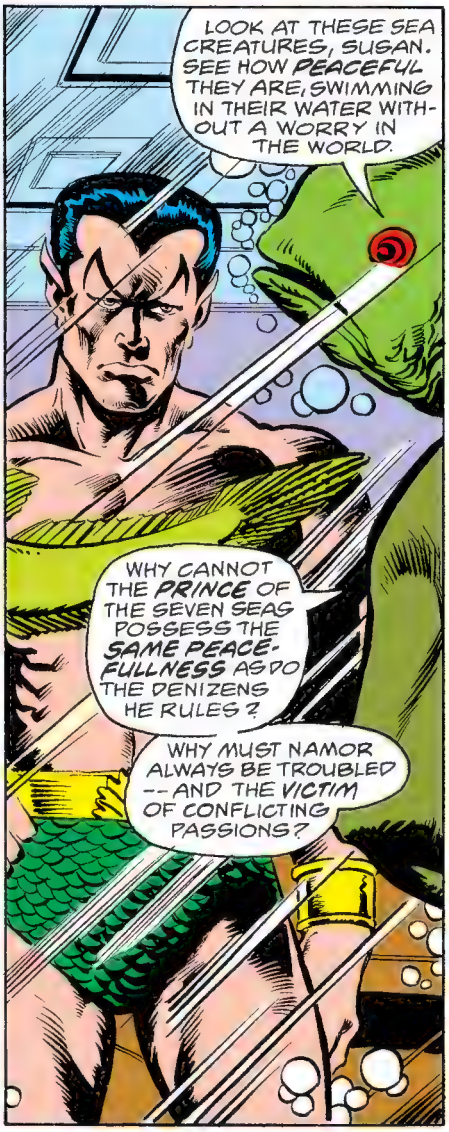
BUT THE ONLY ANSWER SUE RECEIVES IS AN INTERMITTENT RINGING, AND SOON EVEN THAT IS GONE, REPLACED WITH THE ENDLESS MONOTONY OF AN IMPERSONAL DIAL TONE.
IT'S THE SAME EVERY-TIME I TRY--NO ANSWER. BLAST! THEY MUST BE KEEPING HIM RIDICULOUSLY BUSY WITH THAT TOP SECRET JOB HE UNDER-TOOK.
BUT I HAVEN'T SPOKEN TO HIM FOR DAYS, IT'S AS IF SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HI--HEY, WHAT AM I THINKING?
THE F.F.'S NO LONGER AROUND! THERE AREN'T SUPER-VILLAINS LURKING BEHIND EVERY CORNER. THOSE DAYS ARE THANKFULLY OVER.
MS. RICHARDS, YOU'RE WANTED DOWN AT THE MAIN OFFICE
KNOK KNOK
EH? HOLD ON, I'M COMING.
NO USE TRYING REED AGAIN SO SOON. PERHAPS I'D BEST WAIT UNTIL AFTER I SEE WHAT THEY WANT.
OUCH! HEY, THAT HURT!
WHAT? OH NO--! I THOUGHT YOU WERE PLAYING TOURIST WITH FRANKLIN AND AGATHA HARKNESS.
POP!
THAT WAS A REAL BORE. I WANT TO BE WITH YOU AGAIN.
NO! NO! I'M FED UP WITH YOU. EVERYWHERE I LOOK--YOU'RE THERE!
SO HELP ME, IMPY--IF I SEE YOU ONE MORE TIME, I'LL--
SUSAN, YOU'RE BECOMING A REAL PARTY POOPER!
AND HERE I AM TRYING TO BRING SOME FUN INTO YOUR DULL, DRAB LIFE.
POP!
WELL, IF YOU WANT TO BE A DOWNRIGHT DRAG, I'LL FIND SOMEONE WHO CARES.
GOOD HEAVENS! WHAT WAS THAT?
DON'T ASK, MR. TYDE--I CAN'T POSSIBLY EXPLAIN HIM. HE'S AN EXPERIENCE ALL TO HIMSELF.
I'LL HAVE TO TAKE YOUR WORD FOR IT, MS. RICHARDS. CAN WE GO NOW?
I--I GUESS SO.
I'LL TRY CALLING REED AGAIN--LATER.

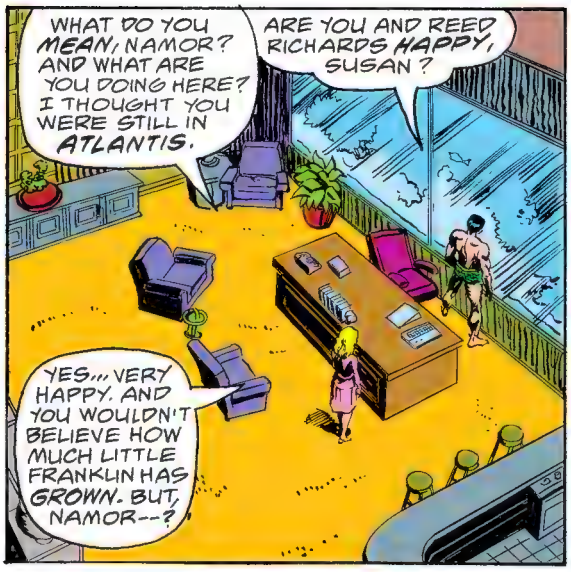

THOUGH THE WORRIED SUSAN RICHARDS CAN'T INSTANTANE--OUSLY TRAVEL CROSS-COUNTRY, THERE ARE NO SCIENTIFIC RULES PREVENTING US FROM HOPPING OVER TO UPSTATE NEW YORK IN LESS TIME THAN IT TAKES FOR A STAR TO TWINKLE.
...STILL NO ANSWER.
THIS IS THE FIFTH TIME I'VE TRIED TO CALL SUE. SHE MUST BE KEEPING HERSELF BUSY OUT THERE, TAKING IN PARTIES, DOING THE WHOLE HOLLYWOOD SCENE.
I SHOULDN'T SUPPOSE SHE'D JUST SIT AROUND ALL DAY WAITING FOR ME TO CALL.
BUT WHY HASN'T SHE TRIED TO PHONE ME?*
HELLO, DOCTOR RICHARDS--
--YOU CAN'T KNOW HOW EXCITED I AM WORKING WITH ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST BRILLIANT SCIENTISTS.
*PUZZLED? KEEP ON READING, MARVELITE, IT GETS EVEN MORE MYSTERIOUS NEXT ISSUE. -- M.W.
HUNH? OH, YES. I'M SORRY, DR. KAMINSKI, I WAS JUST MULLING OVER SOME PERSONAL PROBLEM...
...WHILE I'M GETTING PAID TO WORRY OVER OUR MYSTERY PROJECT.
DIDN'T YOU TELL ME NONE OF THE SCIENTISTS HERE HAVE BEEN TOLD WHAT THEY'RE WORKING ON?
THAT IS CORRECT DOCTOR. WE WERE GIVEN ONLY ONE SECTION OF A PUZZLE. I'VE HEARD RUMORS THERE ARE OTHER SCIENTIFIC TEAMS WORKING ON CONNECTED PROBLEMS.
PART OF NATIONAL SECURITY I HEAR.
YET, SOME OF THE MICRO-CIRCUITRY HAVE ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER OF POSSIBLE FUNCTIONS.
I'M NOT AT ALL CERTAIN, DR. KAMINSKI-- BUT I BELIEVE I KNOW WHAT IS BEING BUILT HERE. AND FRANKLY, I DON'T LIKE IT.
AND...
INCREDIBLE! HIS COMPUTER-LIKE MIND ALREADY UNRAVELS THE VERY SAME SECRET THAT HAD BAFFLED THOSE OTHER SO-CALLED GENIUSES!
HE'S BECOMING SUSPICIOUS, SIR. SHOULD I--?
SILENCE, YOU BUMBLING SIMPLETON. HIS CURIOSITY IS WHAT MAKES HIM THE ONLY MAN CAPABLE OF PERFECTING MY LITTLE DEVICE--
--WHICH WILL HAND OVER TO ME THE CONTROL OF THE PLANET EARTH!


MEANWHILE...
DON'T YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHY I'VE BEEN ASKED HERE?
NO ONE TELLS ME ANYTHING. I'M ONLY PUBLICITY, YOU KNOW!
FACT IS, I LEARNED ABOUT YOU FROM RONA BARRETT!
LOOK, IF YOU NEED ME, I'LL BE HERE. SO DON'T START WORRYING, OKAY?

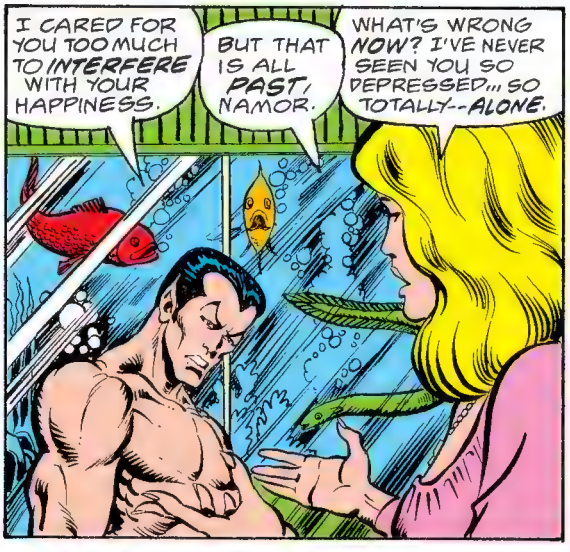

THOUGH WITH YOUR POWERS, I'LL PROBABLY BE LITTLE HELP
STILL THE SAME, YOU'RE A COMFORT. YOU'RE MAKING WHAT COULD BE A VERY WORRISOME TIME INTO SOMETHING I CAN ALMOST MANAGE.

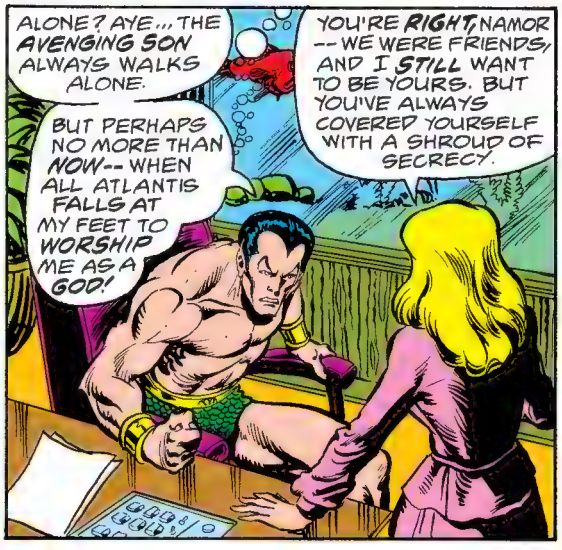

SUE TAKES A TENTATIVE STEP INTO A HUGE PANELED OFFICE. AND THEN ...
IT IS YOU! I--I THOUGHT I SAW AN ACTOR IN MAKE-UP.*
BUT IT'S YOU-- NAMOR!
* LAST ISH --M.W.


LOOK AT THESE SEA CREATURES, SUSAN. SEE HOW PEACEFUL THEY ARE, SWIMMING IN THEIR WATER WITHOUT A WORRY IN THE WORLD.
WHY CANNOT THE PRINCE OF THE SEVEN SEAS POSSESS THE SAME PEACEFULLNESS AS DO THE DENIZENS HE RULES?
WHY MUST NAMOR ALWAYS BE TROUBLED -- AND THE VICTIM OF CONFLICTING PASSIONS?

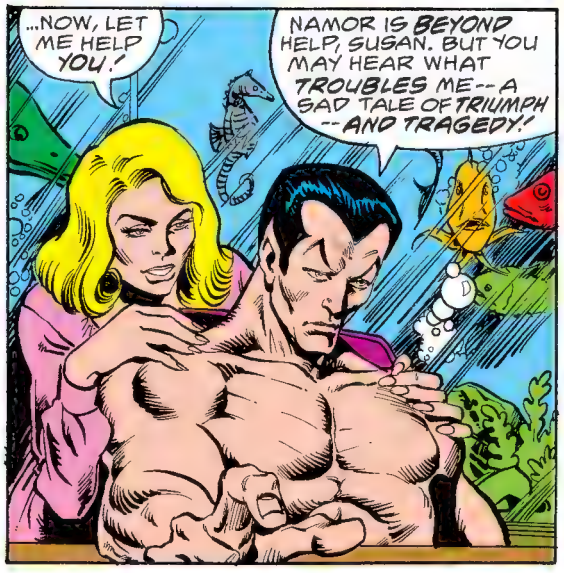

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, NAMOR? AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? I THOUGHT YOU WERE STILL IN ATLANTIS.
ARE YOU AND REED RICHARDS HAPPY, SUSAN?
YES... VERY HAPPY. AND YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH LITTLE FRANKLIN HAS GROWN. BUT, NAMOR--?

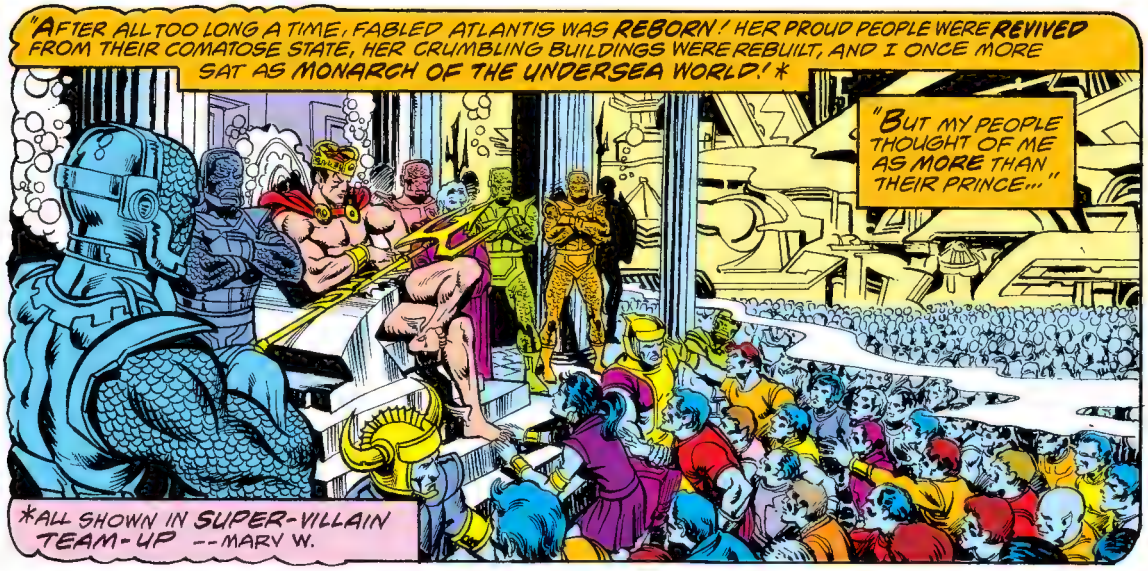
SUSAN, YOU ARE MY FRIEND... PERHAPS MY ONLY FRIEND. EVEN IN THE BEGINNING YOU UNDERSTOOD WHAT MANNER OF MAN NAMOR IS.
I REVEALED MY HEART TO YOU... AND FOR TOO MANY PAINFUL YEARS I-- I LOVED YOU... UNTIL RICHARDS CLAIMED YOU AS HIS, AND NAMOR GALLANTLY STEPPED ASIDE.


I CARED FOR YOU TOO MUCH TO INTERFERE WITH YOUR HAPPINESS.
BUT THAT IS ALL PAST, NAMOR.
WHAT'S WRONG NOW? I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU SO DEPRESSED... SO TOTALLY--ALONE.

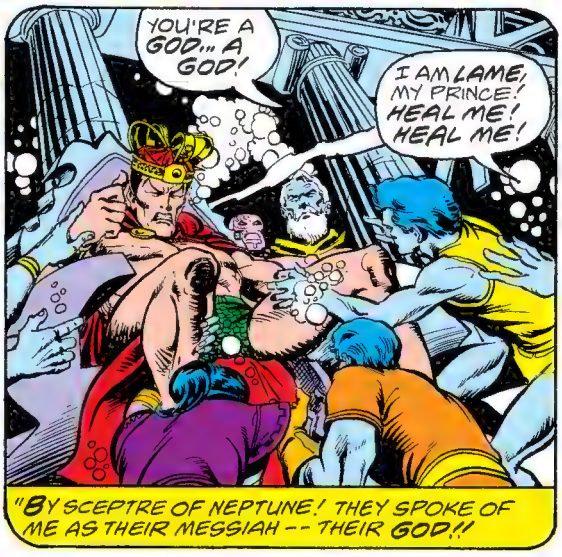

ALONE? AYE... THE AVENGING SON ALWAYS WALKS ALONE.
BUT PERHAPS NO MORE THAN NOW-- WHEN ALL ATLANTIS FALLS AT MY FEET TO WORSHIP ME AS A GOD!
YOU'RE RIGHT, NAMOR -- WE WERE FRIENDS, AND I STILL WANT TO BE YOURS. BUT YOU'VE ALWAYS COVERED YOURSELF WITH A SHROUD OF SECRECY.

YOU'VE MAINTAINED YOUR REGAL POSTURE FOR SO LONG THAT YOU'VE SEPARATED YOURSELF FROM THOSE WHO WANT TO HELP.
NAMOR, PLEASE UNDERSTAND-- I'VE ALWAYS LOVED YOU AS A GOOD FRIEND... I KNOW HOW YOU HELPED REED AND ME WHEN OUR MARRIAGE WAS IN TROUBLE...

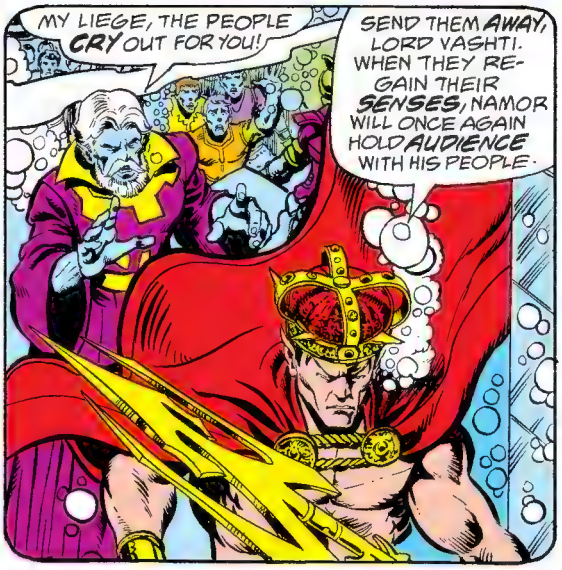

...NOW, LET ME HELP YOU!
NAMOR IS BEYOND HELP, SUSAN. BUT YOU MAY HEAR WHAT TROUBLES ME-- A SAD TALE OF TRIUMPH --AND TRAGEDY!


"AFTER ALL TOO LONG A TIME, FABLED ATLANTIS WAS REBORN! HER PROUD PEOPLE WERE REVIVED FROM THEIR COMATOSE STATE, HER CRUMBLING BUILDINGS WERE REBUILT, AND I ONCE MORE SAT AS MONARCH OF THE UNDERSEA WORLD!*
"BUT MY PEOPLE THOUGHT OF ME AS MORE THAN THEIR PRINCE..."
*ALL SHOWN IN SUPER-VILLAIN TEAM-UP --MARV W.

YOU SAVED US ALL, NAMOR--BLESS YOU, BLESS YOU!


YOU'RE A GOD... A GOD!
I AM LAME, MY PRINCE! HEAL ME! HEAL ME!
"BY SCEPTRE OF NEPTUNE! THEY SPOKE OF ME AS THEIR MESSIAH -- THEIR GOD!!

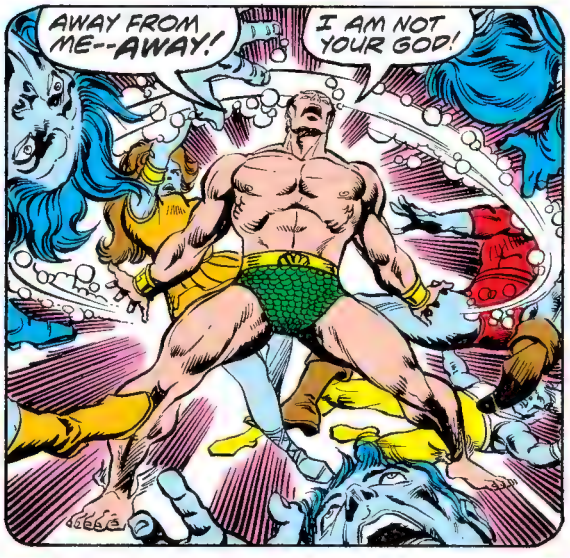
"THEY CAME TO ME NOT AS SUBJECT TO THEIR PRINCE, BUT AS WORSHIPPERS TO THEIR LORD!
STAND ASIDE, YOU FOOLS!
NAMOR IS NO GOD! HE'S A MAN! A MAN!

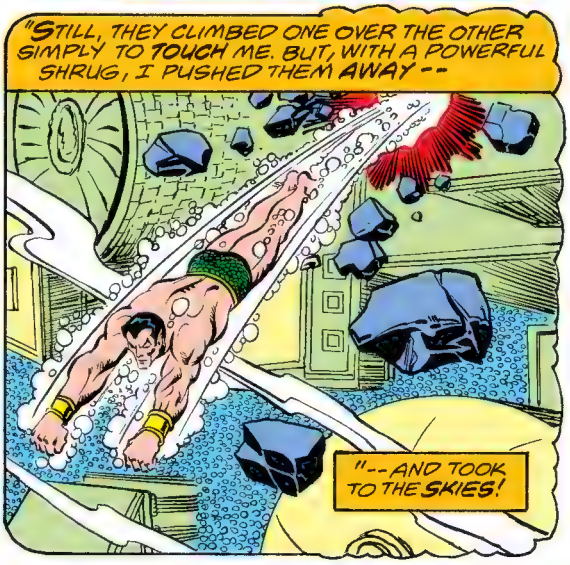

MY LIEGE, THE PEOPLE CRY OUT FOR YOU!
SEND THEM AWAY, LORD VASHTI. WHEN THEY REGAIN THEIR SENSES, NAMOR WILL ONCE AGAIN HOLD AUDIENCE WITH HIS PEOPLE.

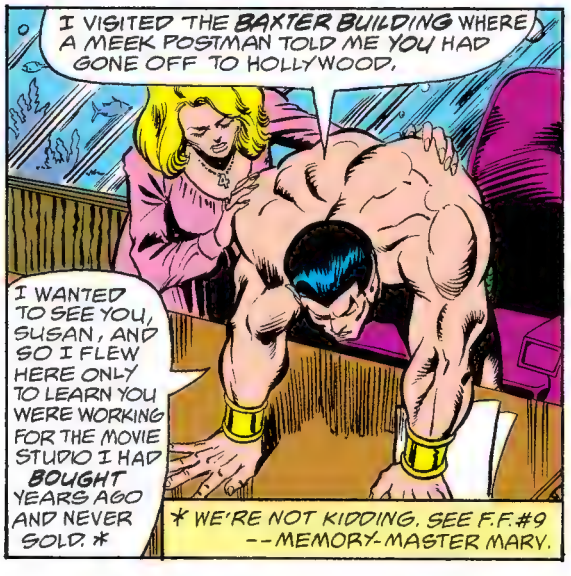
YOU MUST BE MORE UNDERSTANDING, NAMOR. YOU'VE SAVED THEM FROM DISASTER TIME AND TIME AGAIN YOU REVIVED THEM FROM THEIR LIVING DEATH!
IN THEIR FRENZIED ECSTACY, IT IS ONLY NATURAL FOR THEM TO THINK OF YOU AS MORE THAN A MAN.
I DISLIKE BEING DEIFIED, LORD YASHTI!
TELL THEM NAMOR IS THEIR PRINCE --LET THEM WORSHIP NEPTUNE AS THEIR GOD.
THEN YOU FORGET THE TRUTH, NAMOR. REMEMBER, EACH TIME YOU LEAVE ATLANTIS, SOME AWFUL CALAMITY BEFALLS US--
--AND EACH TIME YOU ARE NEEDED TO SAVE OUR PEOPLE FROM MORE THAN CERTAIN DOOM.
THEY LOOK AT YOU, AND WHAT DO THEY SEE? THEY SEE NAMOR THE FIRST, CROWN PRINCE OF ATLANTIS --AND WHAT DOES HE HOLD--?
NAUGHT BUT THE INVINCIBLE SCEPTRE OF NEPTUNE!
THEN I'LL WIELD THIS TRIDENT NO MORE!
I AM NO GOD! I'LL NOT BE WORSHIPPED AS ONE!
SKAK!
BUT...
LET ME THROUGH! I MUST TOUCH NAMOR! HE'LL CURE MY BLINDNESS!
HELP ME! HELP ME!
NAMOR, HEAL ME!

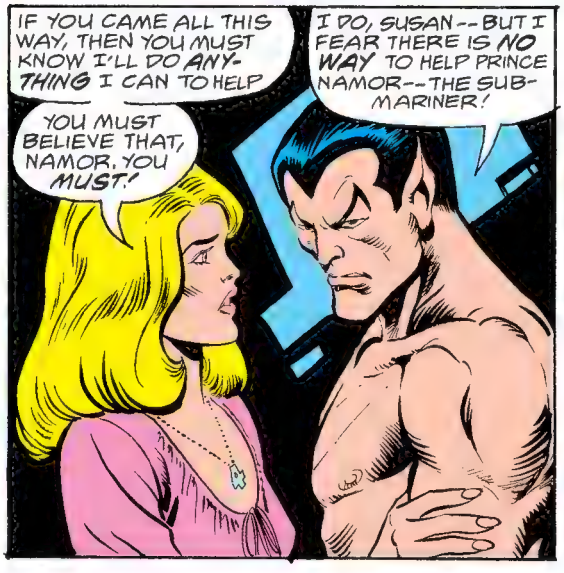
BY THE GLEAMING GATES! THEY ARE ALL MAD!
CURE ME, NAMOR!

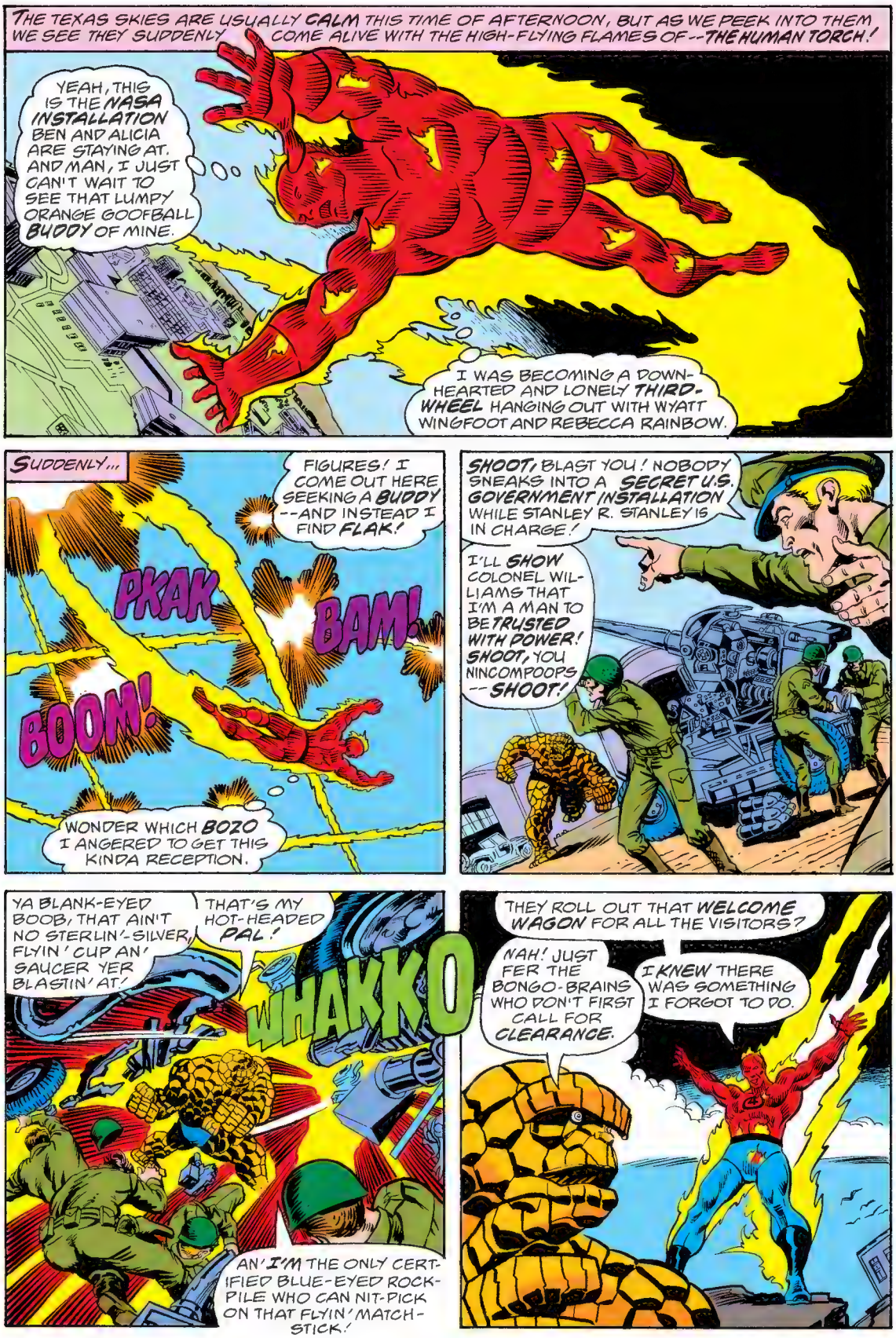
HELP ME!
MY CHILD IS DYING! SAVE HIM!


AWAY FROM ME--AWAY!
I AM NOT YOUR GOD!


"STILL, THEY CLIMBED ONE OVER THE OTHER SIMPLY TO TOUCH ME. BUT, WITH A POWERFUL SHRUG, I PUSHED THEM AWAY--
"--AND TOOK TO THE SKIES!

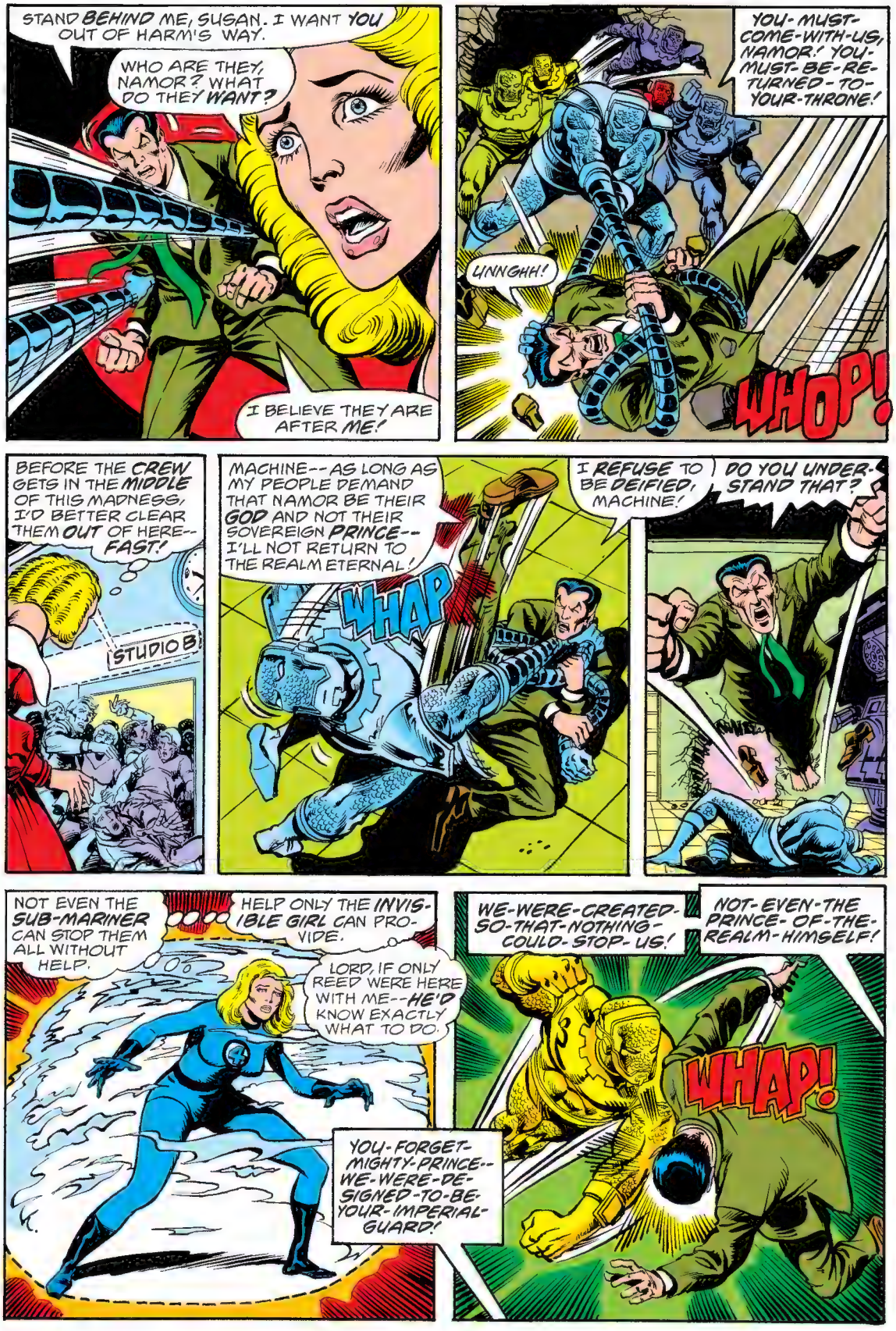

I VISITED THE BAXTER BUILDING WHERE A MEEK POSTMAN TOLD ME YOU HAD GONE OFF TO HOLLYWOOD.
I WANTED TO SEE YOU, SUSAN, AND SO I FLEW HERE ONLY TO LEARN YOU WERE WORKING FOR THE MOVIE STUDIO I HAD BOUGHT YEARS AGO AND NEVER SOLD. *
* WE'RE NOT KIDDING. SEE F.F.#9 --MEMORY-MASTER MARV.

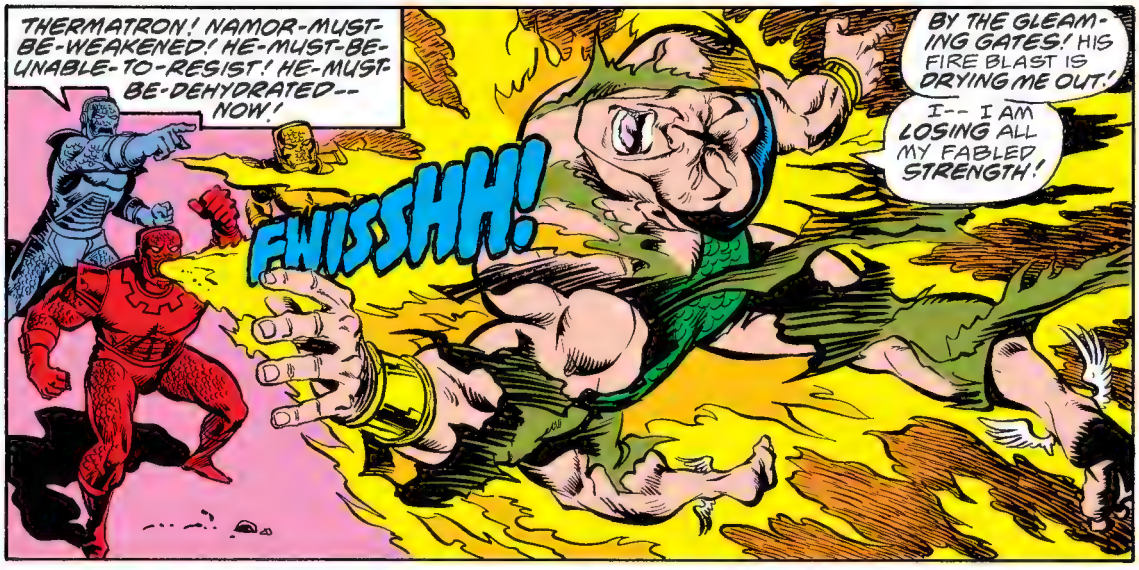

IF YOU CAME ALL THIS WAY, THEN YOU MUST KNOW I'LL DO ANY-THING I CAN TO HELP
YOU MUST BELIEVE THAT, NAMOR, YOU MUST!
I DO, SUSAN--BUT I FEAR THERE IS NO WAY TO HELP PRINCE NAMOR--THE SUB-MARINER!

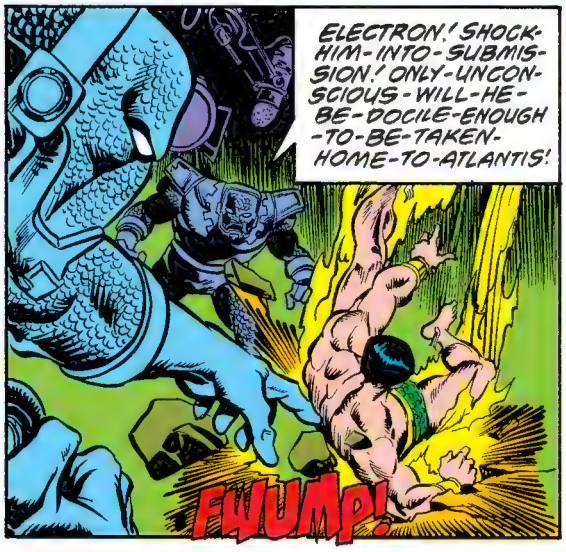

THE TEXAS SKIES ARE USUALLY CALM THIS TIME OF AFTERNOON, BUT AS WE PEEK INTO THEM WE SEE THEY SUDDENLY COME ALIVE WITH THE HIGH-FLYING FLAMES OF--THE HUMAN TORCH!
YEAH, THIS IS THE NASA INSTALLATION BEN AND ALICIA ARE STAYING AT. AND MAN, I JUST CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THAT LUMPY ORANGE GOOFBALL BUDDY OF MINE.
I WAS BECOMING A DOWN-HEARTED AND LONELY THIRD-WHEEL HANGING OUT WITH WYATT WINGFOOT AND REBECCA RAINBOW.
SUDDENLY...
FIGURES! I COME OUT HERE SEEKING A BUDDY --AND INSTEAD I FIND FLAK!
PKAK
BAM!
BOOM!
WONDER WHICH BOZO I ANGERED TO GET THIS KINDA RECEPTION.
SHOOT, BLAST YOU! NOBODY SNEAKS INTO A SECRET U.S. GOVERNMENT INSTALLATION WHILE STANLEY R. STANLEY IS IN CHARGE!
I'LL SHOW COLONEL WILLIAMS THAT I'M A MAN TO BE TRUSTED WITH POWER! SHOOT, YOU NINCOMPOOPS --SHOOT!
YA BLANK-EYED BOOB, THAT AIN'T NO STERLIN'-SILVER, FLYIN' CUP AN' SAUCER YER BLASTIN' AT!
THAT'S MY HOT-HEADED PAL!
WHAKKO
AN' I'M THE ONLY CERTIFIED BLUE-EYED ROCK-PILE WHO CAN NIT-PICK ON THAT FLYIN' MATCH-STICK!
THEY ROLL OUT THAT WELCOME WAGON FOR ALL THE VISITORS?
NAH! JUST FER THE BONGO-BRAINS WHO DON'T FIRST CALL FOR CLEARANCE.
I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING I FORGOT TO DO.

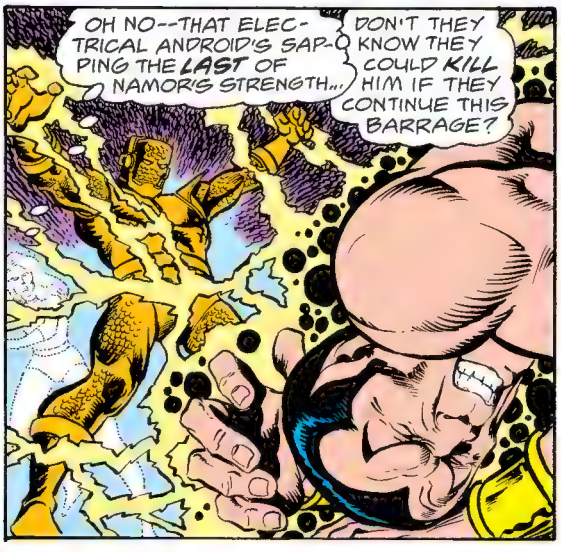
ACTUALLY, IT'S GOOD SEEIN' YA, PUNK. I'VE BEEN GETTIN' LONELY.
ISN'T ALICIA HERE WITH YOU?
NAH, SHE WUZ CALLED BACK EAST TA WORK ON SOME ART TYPE STUFF!
AN' HERE I THOUGHT I'D BE ALL ALONE OUT HERE.
C'MON, HOT-HEAD, YOU'LL LIKE THIS JOINT... IT'S REALLY EXCITIN'.
REALLY? WHERE ARE WE GOING?
IT'S TIME TA WATCH THE CACTUSES GROW!
HEY, WAIT! YOU CAN'T JUST BARGE IN HERE. THERE ARE FORMS TO FILL OUT!
BEFORE BENJAMIN J. GRIMM TELLS STANLEY R. STANLEY WHAT HE CAN DO WITH HIS FORMS ... AND IN TRIPLICATE, YET-- LET'S RETURN TO THE KINGDOM OF TINSEL, GLITTER, AND MAKE-UP...
YOU LOOK ABSOLUTELY RADIANT, SUSAN.
NOT BAD, NOT BAD, PERHAPS A LITTLE MORE CLEAVAGE. REMIND ME TO CALL BOB MACKEY.
WOW! SO THAT'S THE INVISIBLE GIRL.
I HOPE SHE DOESN'T FADE OUT WHILE I'M HERE. SHE'S A REAL DOLL!
...YOU MAY BE RIGHT, SUSAN. WORKING ON THIS MOVIE MAY TAKE MY MIND OFF MY TROUBLES.
YOU'VE GOT TO TRY, NAMOR. YOU'VE NOTHING TO LOSE.
ALL RIGHT, SID, TRY TO REMEMBER THIS TIME, WILLYA? YOU SEE AN INVADING ARMY COMING OVER THE HILL!
YOU REACT-- SHOCK! HORROR! ALL RIGHT, I'LL GIVE YOU THE CUE.
OH, NO-- OH NO! LOOK-- OVER THERE! LOOK!
NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! WHEN I GIVE THE CUE, THE CUE! AND RECITE THE LINES WE GAVE YOU. DON'T MAKE THEM UP.
BY NEPTUNE'S SACRED SCEPTRE! IT CANNOT BE!

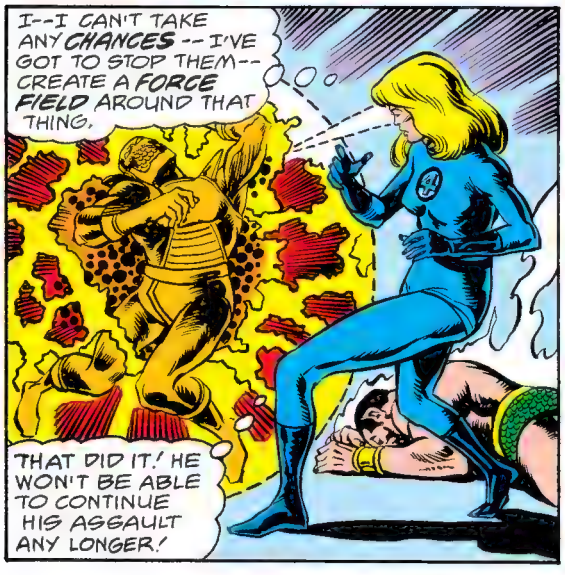
THE RETRIEVERS OF ATLANTIS!
BBKKAMM!
NAMOR! YOUR-PEOPLE-NEED-YOU! YOU-MUST-RETURN-TO ATLANTIS--NOW!
OR-WE-WILL-BE-FORCED-TO-TAKE-YOU-THERE-OURSELVES--
--IN-ANY-MANNER-POSSIBLE!

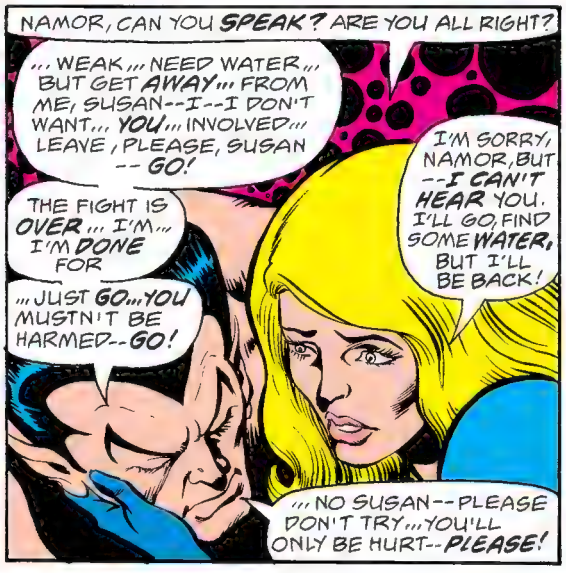

STAND BEHIND ME, SUSAN. I WANT YOU OUT OF HARM'S WAY.
WHO ARE THEY, NAMOR? WHAT DO THEY WANT?
I BELIEVE THEY ARE AFTER ME!
YOU-MUST-COME-WITH-US, NAMOR! YOU-MUST-BE-RE-TURNED-TO-YOUR-THRONE!
UNNGHH!
WHOP!
BEFORE THE CREW GETS IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS MADNESS, I'D BETTER CLEAR THEM OUT OF HERE-- FAST!
STUDIO B
MACHINE--AS LONG AS MY PEOPLE DEMAND THAT NAMOR BE THEIR GOD AND NOT THEIR SOVEREIGN PRINCE-- I'LL NOT RETURN TO THE REALM ETERNAL!
WHAP
I REFUSE TO BE DEIFIED, MACHINE!
DO YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?
NOT EVEN THE SUB-MARINER CAN STOP THEM ALL WITHOUT HELP.
HELP ONLY THE INVISIBLE GIRL CAN PROVIDE.
LORD, IF ONLY REED WERE HERE WITH ME--HE'D KNOW EXACTLY WHAT TO DO.
YOU-FORGET-MIGHTY-PRINCE-- WE-WERE-DESIGNED-TO-BE-YOUR-IMPERIAL-GUARD!
WE-WERE-CREATED-SO-THAT-NOTHING-COULD-STOP-US!
NOT-EVEN-THE-PRINCE-OF-THE-REALM-HIMSELF!
WHAP!


THERMATRON! NAMOR-MUST-BE-WEAKENED! HE-MUST-BE-UNABLE-TO-RESIST! HE-MUST-BE-DEHYDRATED--NOW!
FWISSHH!
BY THE GLEAMING GATES! HIS FIRE BLAST IS DRYING ME OUT!
I-- I AM LOSING ALL MY FABLED STRENGTH!


ELECTRON! SHOCK-HIM-INTO-SUBMISSION! ONLY-UNCONSCIOUS-WILL-HE-BE-DOCILE-ENOUGH-TO-BE-TAKEN-HOME-TO-ATLANTIS!
FWUMP!


OH NO--THAT ELECTRICAL ANDROID'S SAPPING THE LAST OF NAMOR'S STRENGTH...
DON'T THEY KNOW THEY COULD KILL HIM IF THEY CONTINUE THIS BARRAGE?


I--I CAN'T TAKE ANY CHANCES -- I'VE GOT TO STOP THEM-- CREATE A FORCE FIELD AROUND THAT THING.
THAT DID IT! HE WON'T BE ABLE TO CONTINUE HIS ASSAULT ANY LONGER!

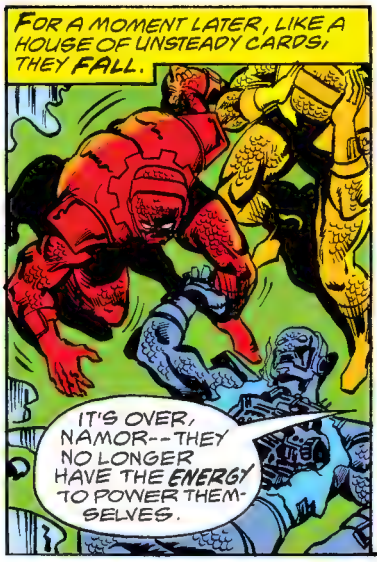

NAMOR, CAN YOU SPEAK? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
... WEAK ... NEED WATER ... BUT GET AWAY ... FROM ME, SUSAN--I--I DON'T WANT ... YOU ... INVOLVED ... LEAVE, PLEASE, SUSAN -- GO!
I'M SORRY, NAMOR, BUT --I CAN'T HEAR YOU. I'LL GO, FIND SOME WATER, BUT I'LL BE BACK!
THE FIGHT IS OVER ... I'M ... I'M DONE FOR
... JUST GO ... YOU MUSTN'T BE HARMED--GO!
... NO SUSAN--PLEASE DON'T TRY ... YOU'LL ONLY BE HURT--PLEASE!

THE-FEMALE-HUMAN-INTERFERES! THERMA-TRON--INCINERATE HER!
ONLY-SHE-PREVENTS-US-FROM-RETRIEVING-OUR-PRINCE!
THERE'S NO WAY TO CONTINUALLY DEFEND MYSELF AGAINST ALL OF THEM...
...MY ONLY HOPE IS TO TAKE THE OFFENSIVE--PLACE MYSELF WHERE I CAN BEST HELP NAMOR.
KRAK!
SUSAN RICHARDS STARES UPWARD TO THE STEEL CATWALK THAT CIRCLES THE EXPANSIVE STUDIO. SHE FOCUSES HER INCREDIBLE POWER TO A FINELY PRECISIONED BEAM...
...A BEAM THAT SHATTERS THE CATWALK'S SUPPORT SCREWS--
--AND SENDS THE STEEL WALKWAY SPIRALLING DOWN!
ONE DOWN, BUT I'M NOT EVEN CLOSE TO WHERE I SHOULD BE--
WHOMP!
HUNH? ANOTHER OF THOSE ANDROID ATTACKERS--ONLY THIS ONE'S EXPANDING LIKE A JELLYFISH!
WHAT DO I DO NOW? EVERYTHING'S HAPPENING SO QUICKLY I CAN HARDLY PLAN MY NEXT MOVE.
WHAT WOULD REED HAVE ME DO? C'MON, SUE--THINK, BLAST IT--THINK!
WAIT... IF I CAN EXPAND MY FIELD AROUND ME--FORCE THE CREATURE TO EXPAND AS WELL...
...PERHAPS IT WILL REACH ITS LIMIT BEFORE I REACH MINE!
UNNHHH! NO USE ...THE PAIN'S STARTING TO HIT ME NOW... I CAN'T KEEP THIS UP MUCH LONGER...
I'VE FAILED NAMOR. I'VE FAILED MYSELF.

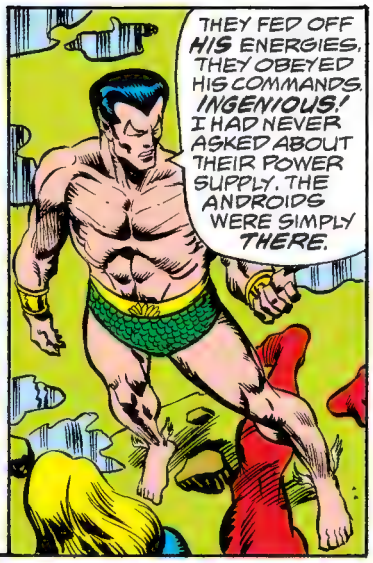
BUT...
SPA-SKAMM!
I GUESS IT WAS STRAINING EVEN MORE THAN I WAS! BUT I'VE STILL GOT HALF THE STUDIO TO COVER--UNLESS I CAN PROJECT MY POWER ITS FULL DISTANCE!
THERE! I JUST MADE IT-- NOW TO PRAY THAT TENDRILLED ROBOT IS AS STRONG AS IT LOOKS!
KRAK!
WHOOSH!
IT WORKED! THANK HEAVEN IT DIDN'T REALIZE I LURED IT TO THE WALL THAT BORDERED NAMOR'S OFFICE AND HIS GIANT FISH TANK!
"BUT THEN, IT ALSO DIDN'T REALIZE I JUST MADE THAT SAME WALL INVISIBLE!"
W-WATER? IT'S FLOODING OVER ME... ALREADY THE MOISTURE IS STRENGTHENING ME!
I FEEL MY FULL POWER RETURNING!
RETRIEVERS! NO LONGER DO YOU BATTLE A WEAK MOCKERY OF NAMOR!
NOW, STAND BACK AND GASP AT THE MAJESTIC MIGHT OF THE ONE TRUE SUB-MARINER!
KRUNCH!

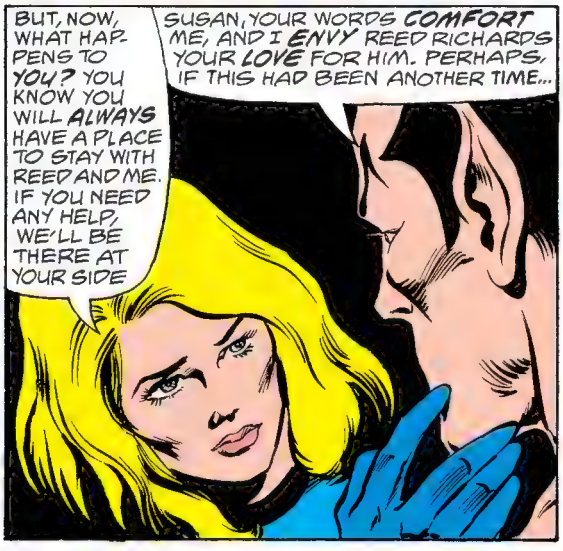
THE RETRIEVERS SPIN ON THEIR GYRO-STABILIZERS, BUT EVEN THEIR INSTANTANEOUS COMPUTER REACTIONS ARE NOT QUICK ENOUGH TO REGISTER THEIR SUDDEN SHOCK AND COMPUTE THEIR NEXT COURSE OF ACTION.
BASKONG!
SO, THE FLYING RETRIEVER THINKS HE CAN FACE THE AVENGING SON? WELL, LET THE ANDROID TRY!
THEN LET HIM LEARN THAT NO MAN OR MACHINE HAS THE STRENGTH TO SLAY THE PRINCE OF ATLANTIS--WHEN HIS POWER IS AT ITS GREATEST!
NAMOR WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED! IMPERIUS REX!
WHAKKO!
YOU--THE ONE THEY CALL ELECTRON--I OWE YOU FOR THE PAIN YOU INFLICTED! NOW NAMOR DEMANDS HIS JUST RETRIBUTION!
THERMATRON! ELECTRON! SYPHON HIS STRENGTH--BUT DO-NOT-KILL-HIM!
HE-MUST-BE-RETURNED TO-ATLANTIS--ALIVE!
HIS-SUBJECTS-DEMAND-TO-WORSHIP-HIM-AS-IS-HIS-DUE!
NAY, ANDROID--NO LONGER SHALL NAMOR BE A HELPLESS TARGET!
--FROM THIS MOMENT ON--HE IS YOUR DESTROYER!

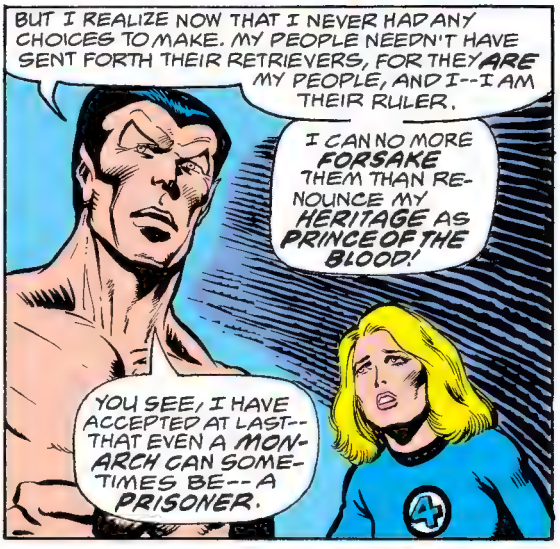
I'VE FELT OUT OF PLACE EVER SINCE I CAME TO HOLLYWOOD... I WONDERED IF BREAKING UP THE F.F. WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO--I'D EVEN WORN MY COSTUME TO TAKE THE EDGE OFF MY UNEASINESS.
BUT NOW I REALIZE WHAT'S BEEN UPSETTING ME--IT'S LIVING WITHOUT REED... IT'S BEING WITHOUT THE MAN I LOVE--
SUSAN! ACTIVATE YOUR FORCE FIELD!
WHAT? IF NAMOR HADN'T SHOUTED, THERMATRON WOULD HAVE BROILED ME!
YOU! YOU STAND BACK AND ORDER THOSE OTHERS TO ATTACK. I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS FOLLY, ANDROID! DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?
WHAP!
RETRIEVERS! ASSIST YOUR LEADER!
NAMOR'S CAUGHT IN THE ANDROID'S GRIP... HE CAN'T ESCAPE THEIR BLAST, UNLESS--
WHAT? THE PRINCE HAS BECOME INVISIBLE! RETRIEVERS! CEASE ATTACK! I'VE LOST MY HOLD ON HIM! CEASE ATTA--
BAWHAMO
BUT IT IS TOO LATE. ELECTRON HAS ALREADY TAKEN AIM; THERMATRON HAS SUMMONED FORTH HIS FIERY POWER. THEN, AT ONCE, THEY UNLEASH THEIR INCREDIBLE MIGHT--
--WHICH CREATES AN EFFECT THAT NEITHER OF THEM COULD HAVE DREAMT POSSIBLE...

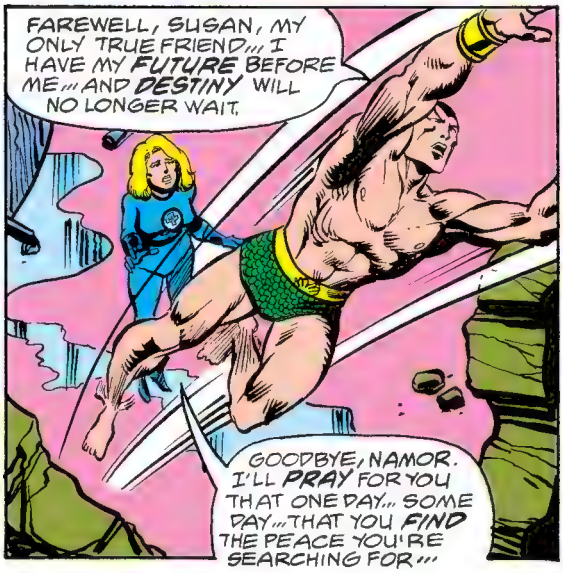

FOR A MOMENT LATER, LIKE A HOUSE OF UNSTEADY CARDS, THEY FALL.
IT'S OVER, NAMOR--THEY NO LONGER HAVE THE ENERGY TO POWER THEMSELVES.

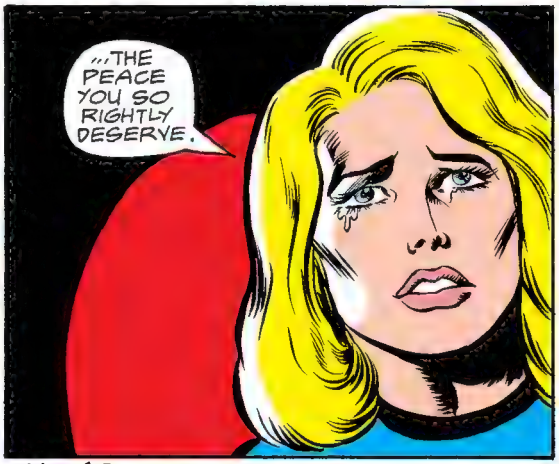
WHEN YOU POINTED OUT THAT ONLY ONE OF THE RETRIEVERS EVER SPOKE... AND THAT HE NEVER JOINED THE BATTLE IN ANY OTHER WAY... I REASONED HE MUST HAVE BEEN THEIR SOURCE OF POWER.


THEY FED OFF HIS ENERGIES, THEY OBEYED HIS COMMANDS. INGENIOUS! I HAD NEVER ASKED ABOUT THEIR POWER SUPPLY. THE ANDROIDS WERE SIMPLY THERE.


BUT, NOW, WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU? YOU KNOW YOU WILL ALWAYS HAVE A PLACE TO STAY WITH REED AND ME. IF YOU NEED ANY HELP, WE'LL BE THERE AT YOUR SIDE
SUSAN, YOUR WORDS COMFORT ME, AND I ENVY REED RICHARDS YOUR LOVE FOR HIM. PERHAPS, IF THIS HAD BEEN ANOTHER TIME...


BUT I REALIZE NOW THAT I NEVER HAD ANY CHOICES TO MAKE. MY PEOPLE NEEDN'T HAVE SENT FORTH THEIR RETRIEVERS, FOR THEY ARE MY PEOPLE, AND I--I AM THEIR RULER.
I CAN NO MORE FORSAKE THEM THAN RENOUNCE MY HERITAGE AS PRINCE OF THE BLOOD!
YOU SEE, I HAVE ACCEPTED AT LAST--THAT EVEN A MONARCH CAN SOMETIMES BE--A PRISONER.


FAREWELL, SUSAN, MY ONLY TRUE FRIEND... I HAVE MY FUTURE BEFORE ME... AND DESTINY WILL NO LONGER WAIT.
GOODBYE, NAMOR. I'LL PRAY FOR YOU THAT ONE DAY... SOMEDAY... THAT YOU FIND THE PEACE YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR...



NEXT: JUST WHO IN THE WORLD IS THE **INVINCIBLE MAN?**

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FANTASTIC FOUR
THE FANTASTIC FOUR ARE FINISHED AT LAST!
COURTESY OF THE MIND-NUMBING POWERS OF THE INVINCIBLE MAN!
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I CAN SEE!
AND I SEE YOU'RE A HIDEOUS MONSTER!
NO! DON'T SAY THAT!
YOU'RE MY CHILDREN-- AND YOU KILLED ME!!
BUT I'VE COME BACK TO AVENGE MY MURDER!
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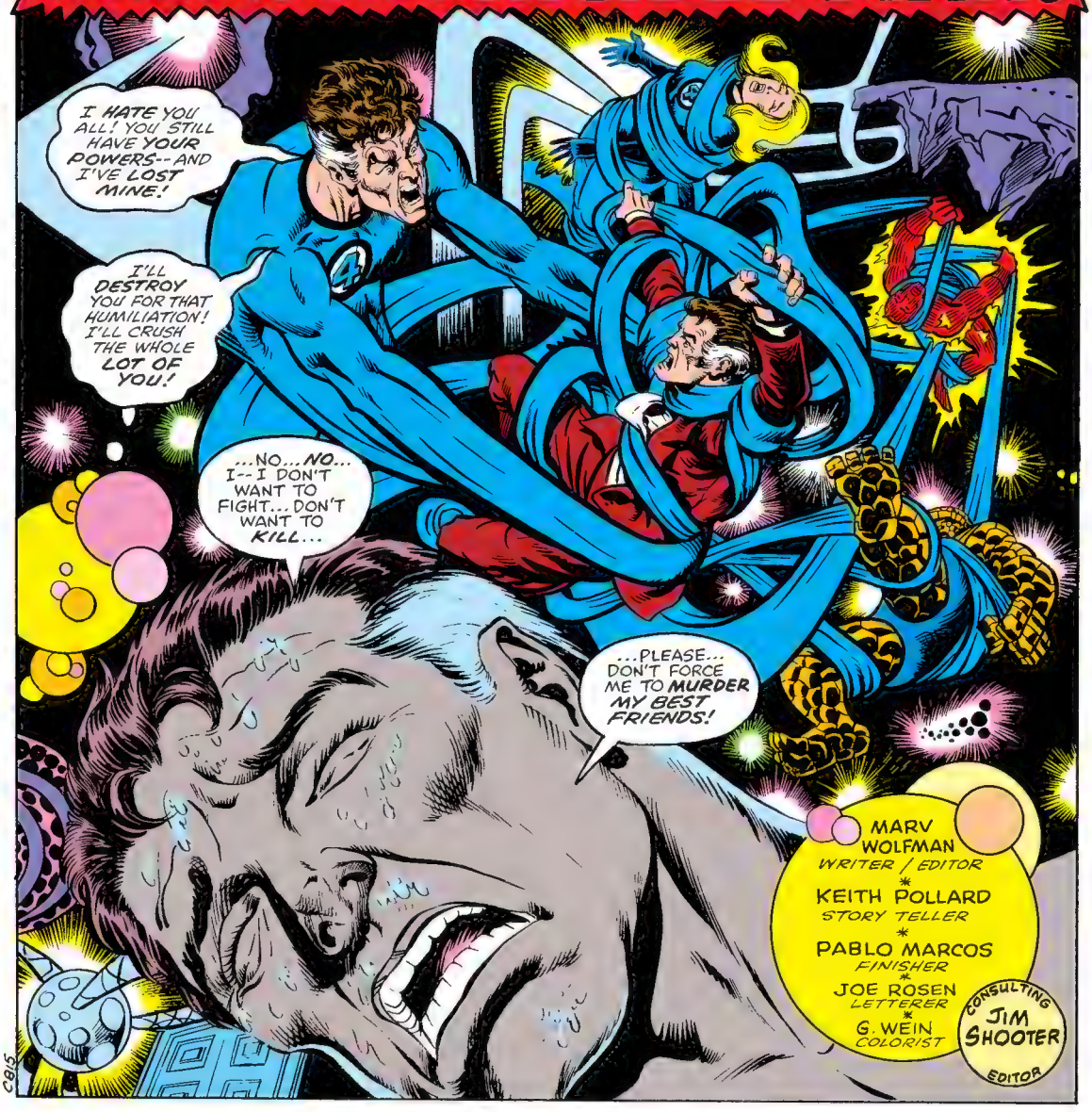
WHO IN THE WORLD IS THE INVINCIBLE MAN?

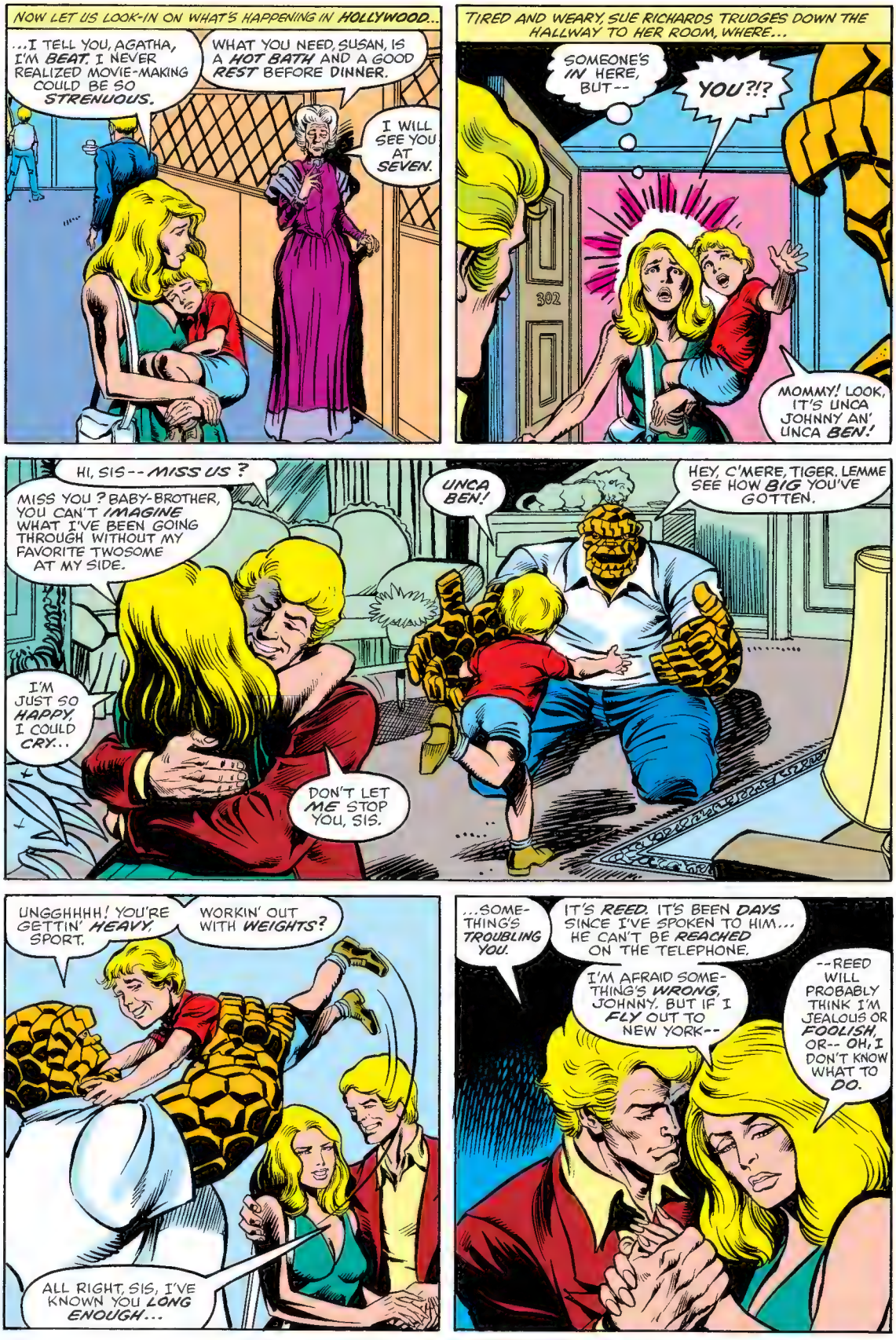

I HATE YOU ALL! YOU STILL HAVE YOUR POWERS--AND I'VE LOST MINE!
I'LL DESTROY YOU FOR THAT HUMILIATION! I'LL CRUSH THE WHOLE LOT OF YOU!
...NO... NO... I--I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT... DON'T WANT TO KILL...
...PLEASE... DON'T FORCE ME TO MURDER MY BEST FRIENDS!

MARV WOLFMAN
WRITER / EDITOR
*
KEITH POLLARD
STORY TELLER
*
PABLO MARCOS
FINISHER
*
JOE ROSEN
LETTERER
*
G. WEIN
COLORIST

CONSULTING JIM SHOOTER EDITOR

C815

SIR, HE'S RESISTING THE HYPNO-PERSUADER. HIS WILL TO REFUSE PROGRAMMING IS ASTONISHING. YOUR PLAN MAY FAIL.
SILENCE, YOU SICKENING JACKANAPE! NEVER MENTION FAILURE TO ME.
INCREASE THE TRACKING BEAM TO TEN THOUSAND MEGA-OHMS. RICHARDS' WILL MUST BE SHATTERED!
HE MUST BE MINE TO CONTROL!
TEN THOUSAND MEGA-OHMS? THAT IS ENOUGH TO KILL HIM!
DO AS I DEMAND, DOLT--AND NEVER AGAIN QUESTION YOUR MASTER--OR I SHALL BE FORCED TO REMOVE YOU...AS I REMOVED YOUR LATE AND PRECIOUS BROTHER.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME, HAUPTMANN?
I UNDERSTAND, SIR...AND I BEG FORGIVENESS.
HAUPTMANN, YOU ARE A SNIVELLING TOADY--AND I DETEST YOU.
BUT I HAVE NEED OF YOUR SCIENCE... AND AS LONG AS I DO, YOU SHALL LIVE.
I SWEAR YOU HAVE MY UNDYING LOYALTY, SIR.
BAH! I DON'T WANT YOUR FOOLISH LOYALTY. I WANT ONLY THAT YOU FEAR ME.
FOR FEAR WILL CONTROL YOU FAR BETTER THAN SHIFTING LOYALTIES.
NOW THEN, WRETCH--IS EVERYTHING PREPARED?
ALL IS READY, SIR. THE REQUIRED COMPONENTS HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THE PSYCHO-MAN'S UNIFORM.
FEAR
DOUBT
HATE
GOOD. THEN OPERATION: CORONATION HAS FINALLY BEGUN!


NOW LET US LOOK-IN ON WHAT'S HAPPENING IN HOLLYWOOD...
...I TELL YOU, AGATHA, I'M BEAT. I NEVER REALIZED MOVIE-MAKING COULD BE SO STRENUOUS.
WHAT YOU NEED, SUSAN, IS A HOT BATH AND A GOOD REST BEFORE DINNER.
I WILL SEE YOU AT SEVEN.
TIRED AND WEARY, SUE RICHARDS TRUDGES DOWN THE HALLWAY TO HER ROOM, WHERE...
SOMEONE'S IN HERE, BUT--
YOU?!?
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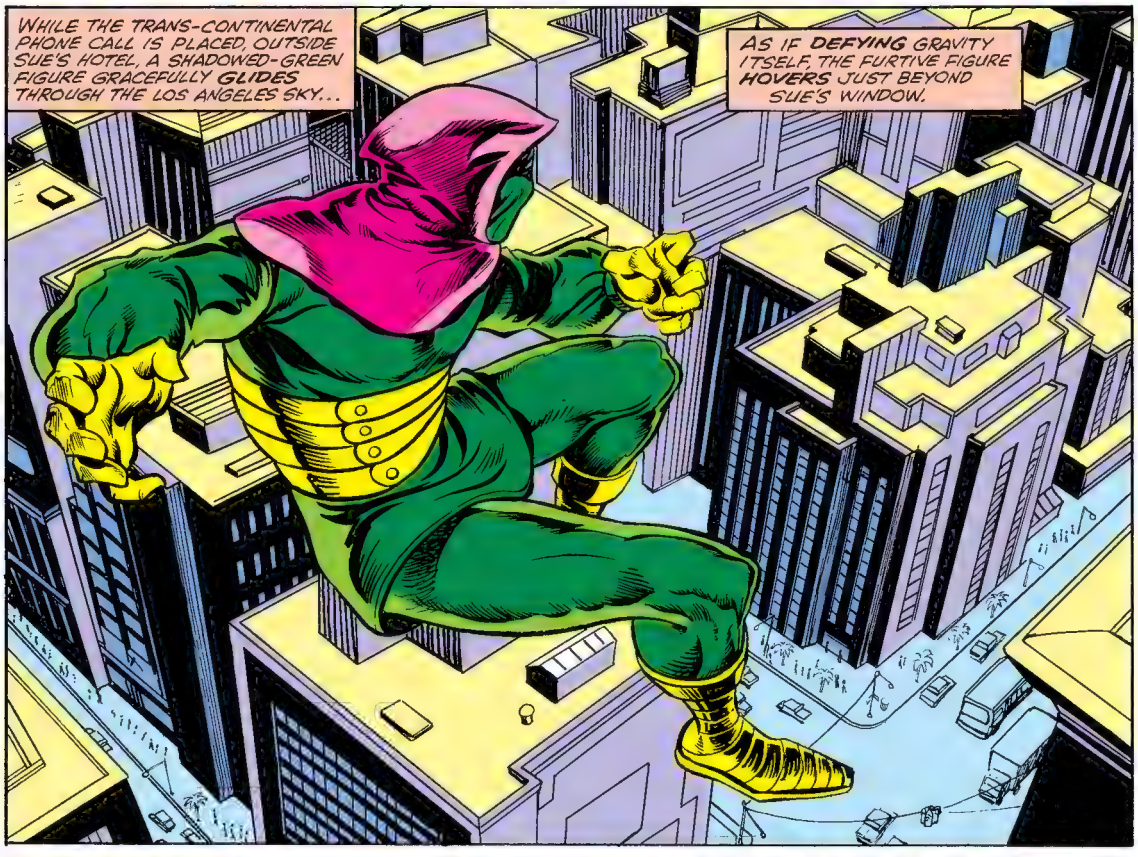
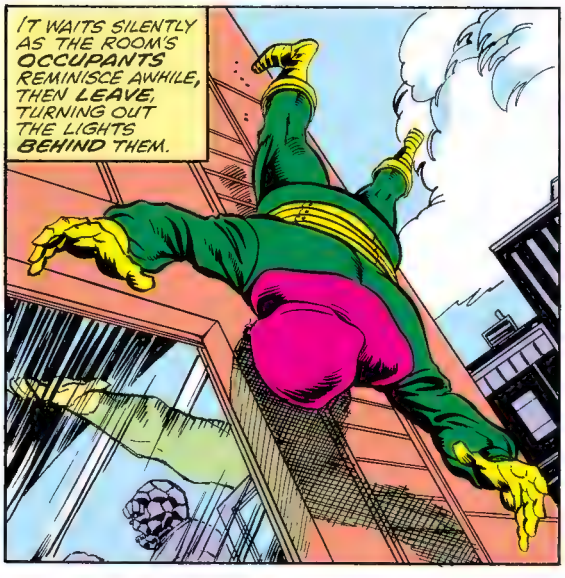
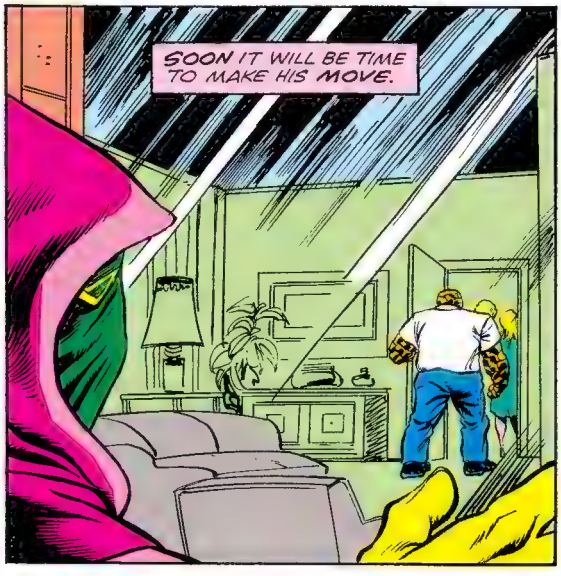
MOMMY! LOOK, IT'S UNCA JOHNNY AN' UNCA BEN!
HI, SIS--MISS US?
MISS YOU? BABY-BROTHER, YOU CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT I'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH WITHOUT MY FAVORITE TWOSOME AT MY SIDE.
UNCA BEN!
HEY, C'MERE, TIGER. LEMME SEE HOW BIG YOU'VE GOTTEN.
I'M JUST SO HAPPY, I COULD CRY...
DON'T LET ME STOP YOU, SIS.
UNGGHHHH! YOU'RE GETTIN' HEAVY, SPORT.
WORKIN' OUT WITH WEIGHTS?
ALL RIGHT, SIS, I'VE KNOWN YOU LONG ENOUGH...
...SOMETHING'S TROUBLING YOU.
IT'S REED. IT'S BEEN DAYS SINCE I'VE SPOKEN TO HIM... HE CAN'T BE REACHED ON THE TELEPHONE.
I'M AFRAID SOMETHING'S WRONG, JOHNNY. BUT IF I FLY OUT TO NEW YORK--
--REED WILL PROBABLY THINK I'M JEALOUS OR FOOLISH, OR-- OH, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.

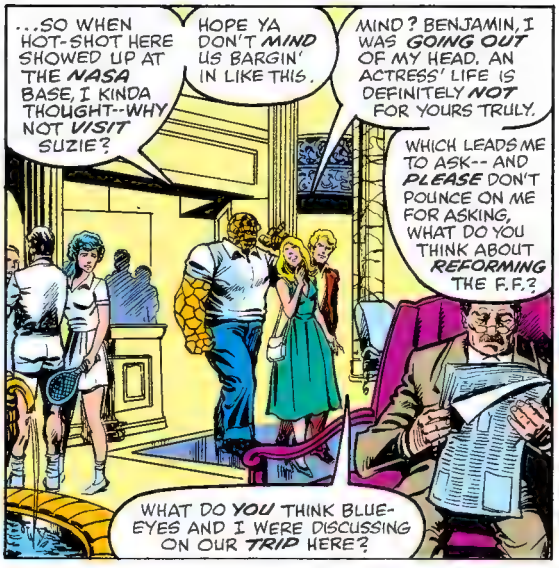
DON'T WORRY IT, SUZIE. BASHFUL BENJY'LL GET YER HIGH-BROWED HUBBY YAPPIN' AT YA PRONTO.
UNNHHHH... BUT COULD ONE'A YA LEND ME A FINGER TA DO THE DIALIN' WITH?

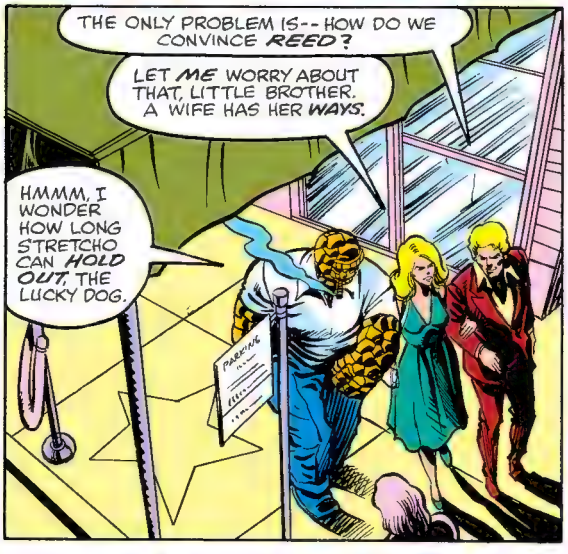

WHILE THE TRANS-CONTINENTAL PHONE CALL IS PLACED, OUTSIDE SUE'S HOTEL, A SHADOWED-GREEN FIGURE GRACEFULLY GLIDES THROUGH THE LOS ANGELES SKY...
AS IF DEFYING GRAVITY ITSELF, THE FURTIVE FIGURE HOVERS JUST BEYOND SUE'S WINDOW.


IT WAITS SILENTLY AS THE ROOM'S OCCUPANTS REMINISCE AWHILE, THEN LEAVE, TURNING OUT THE LIGHTS BEHIND THEM.


SOON IT WILL BE TIME TO MAKE HIS MOVE.

CALM DOWN, FELLA. WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
THAT'S RIGHT, SQUIRT. WE'RE JUST GETTIN' SOME MUNCHIES.
YOU DON'T MIND NOT COMING WITH US, AGATHA?
MY DEAR, YOU HAVE MUCH TO TALK ABOUT. ENJOY YOURSELVES.

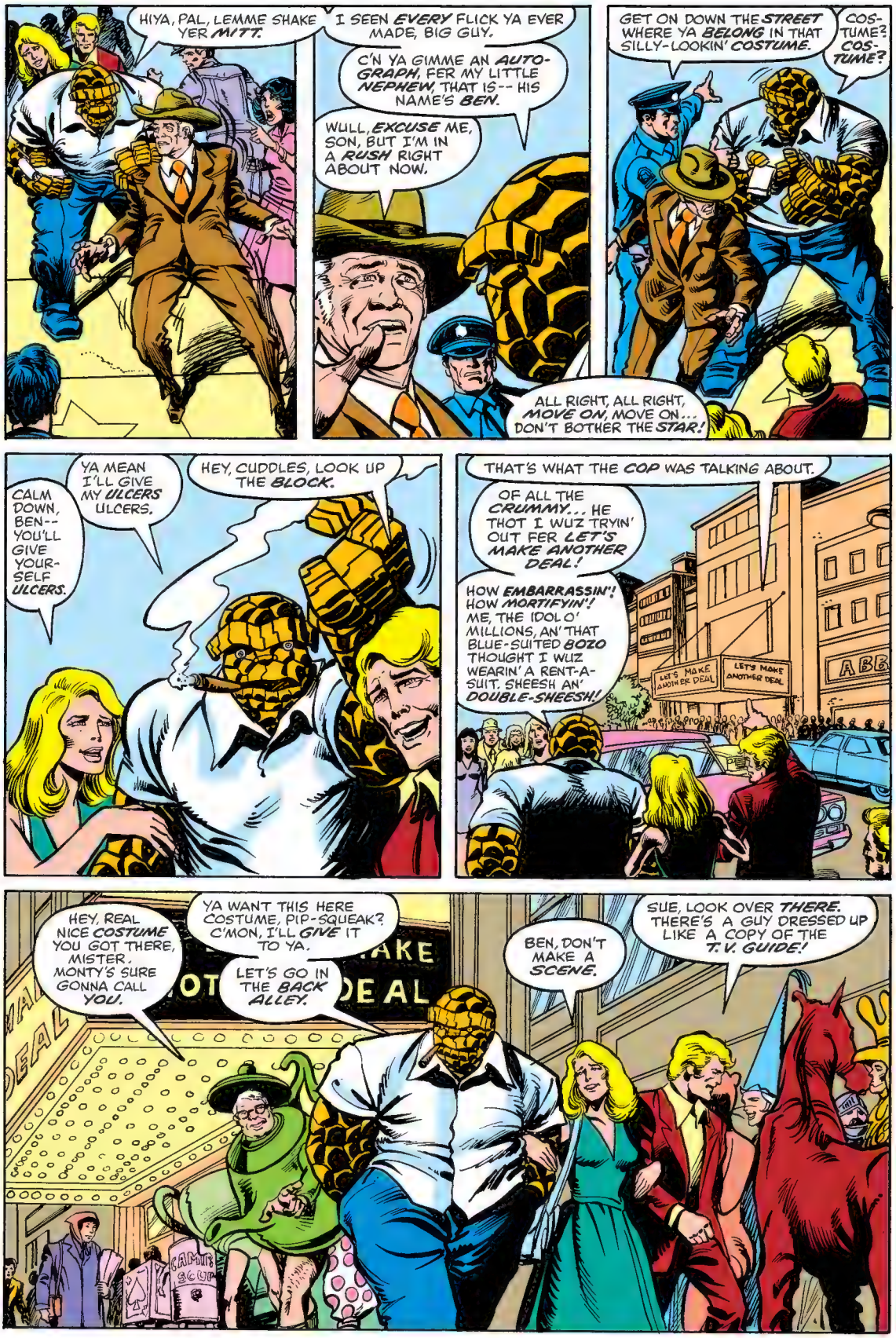

...SO WHEN HOT-SHOT HERE SHOWED UP AT THE NASA BASE, I KINDA THOUGHT--WHY NOT VISIT SUZIE?
HOPE YA DON'T MIND US BARGIN' IN LIKE THIS.
MIND? BENJAMIN, I WAS GOING OUT OF MY HEAD. AN ACTRESS' LIFE IS DEFINITELY NOT FOR YOURS TRULY.
WHICH LEADS ME TO ASK-- AND PLEASE DON'T POUNCE ON ME FOR ASKING, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT REFORMING THE F.F.?
WHAT DO YOU THINK BLUE-EYES AND I WERE DISCUSSING ON OUR TRIP HERE?


THE ONLY PROBLEM IS-- HOW DO WE CONVINCE REED?
LET ME WORRY ABOUT THAT, LITTLE BROTHER. A WIFE HAS HER WAYS.
HMMM, I WONDER HOW LONG STRETCHO CAN HOLD OUT, THE LUCKY DOG.
PARKING

HEY! COMB MY HAIR AN' CALL ME CURLY! LOOK, THERE'S CLINT EASTWOOD'S STAR...
...AN' THERE'S BETTE DAVIS'S. YA THINK THEY GOT ONE FER FARRAH FAWCETT?
YEAH, BUT IT'S IN THE SHAPE OF HER TEETH.

I'LL IGNORE THAT, MATCH-STICK, MAINLY 'CAUSE I'M SUCH A GENEROUS GUY.
BUT NEXT TIME, I'LL--SUZIE? JOHNNY? IS THAT WHO I THINK IT IS?
TELL ME I AIN'T FLIPPIN' OUT. TELL ME I'M NOT BIG AN' ORANGE AN' DUMB.
LORD, A STRAIGHT LINE IF I EVER HEARD ONE, AND I CAN'T PICK UP ON IT. YES, BEN-- IT'S HIM.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT. RIGHT NEXT'A WILLIE BENDIX. HE'S MY ONE AN' ONLY IDOL.


HIYA, PAL, LEMME SHAKE YER MITT.
I SEEN EVERY FLICK YA EVER MADE, BIG GUY.
C'N YA GIMME AN AUTO-GRAPH, FER MY LITTLE NEPHEW, THAT IS-- HIS NAME'S BEN.
WULL, EXCUSE ME, SON, BUT I'M IN A RUSH RIGHT ABOUT NOW.
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, MOVE ON, MOVE ON... DON'T BOTHER THE STAR!
GET ON DOWN THE STREET WHERE YA BELONG IN THAT SILLY-LOOKIN' COSTUME.
COS-TUME? COS-TUME?
CALM DOWN, BEN-- YOU'LL GIVE YOUR-SELF ULCERS.
YA MEAN I'LL GIVE MY ULCERS ULCERS.
HEY, CUDDLES, LOOK UP THE BLOCK.
THAT'S WHAT THE COP WAS TALKING ABOUT.
OF ALL THE CRUMMY... HE THOT I WUZ TRYIN' OUT FER LET'S MAKE ANOTHER DEAL!
HOW EMBARRASSIN'! HOW MORTIFYIN'! ME, THE IDOL O' MILLIONS, AN' THAT BLUE-SUITED BOZO THOUGHT I WUZ WEARIN' A RENT-A-SUIT. SHEESH AN' DOUBLE-SHEESH!
LET'S MAKE ANOTHER DEAL
LET'S MAKE ANOTHER DEAL
HEY, REAL NICE COSTUME YOU GOT THERE, MISTER. MONTY'S SURE GONNA CALL YOU.
YA WANT THIS HERE COSTUME, PIP-SQUEAK? C'MON, I'LL GIVE IT TO YA.
LET'S GO IN THE BACK ALLEY.
BEN, DON'T MAKE A SCENE.
SUE, LOOK OVER THERE. THERE'S A GUY DRESSED UP LIKE A COPY OF THE T.V. GUIDE!

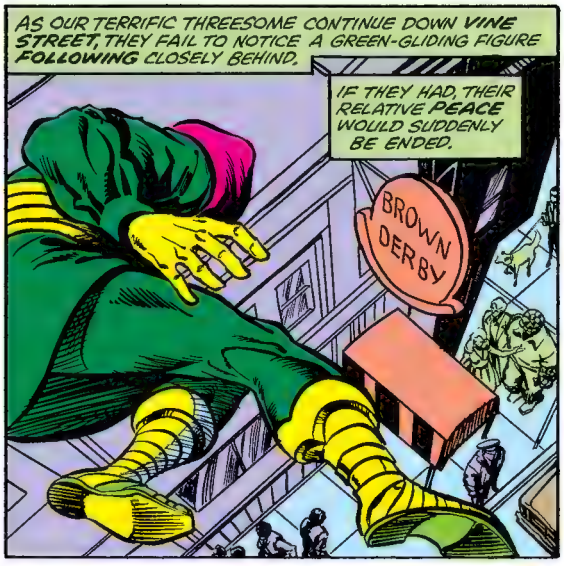
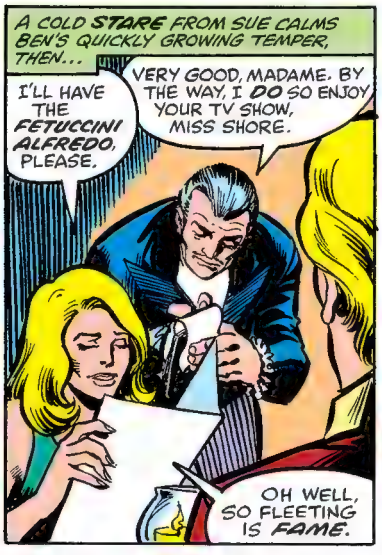
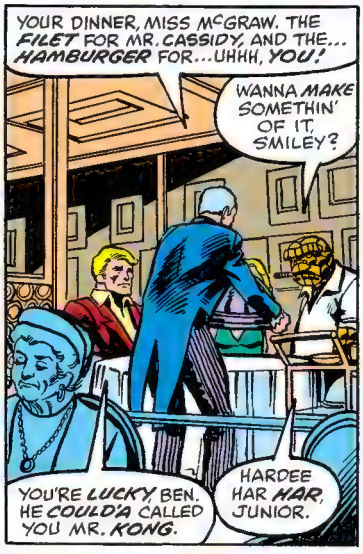
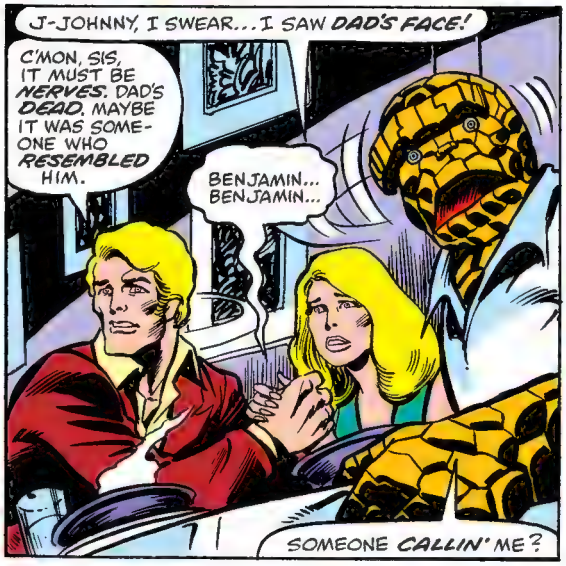

AS OUR TERRIFIC THREESOME CONTINUE DOWN VINE STREET, THEY FAIL TO NOTICE A GREEN-GLIDING FIGURE FOLLOWING CLOSELY BEHIND.
IF THEY HAD, THEIR RELATIVE PEACE WOULD SUDDENLY BE ENDED.
BROWN DERBY

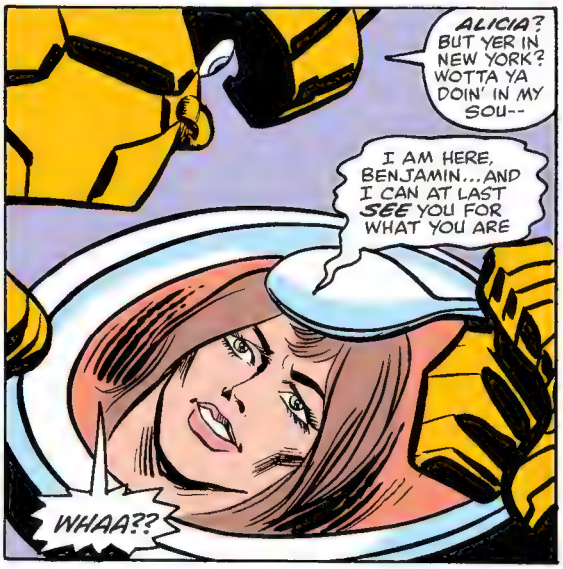
TABLE FOR THREE, MA'AM, AND WE ARE HONORED TO HAVE YOU HERE.
YOU RECOGNIZE US, EVEN OUT OF COSTUME?
MADAME, MY JOB IS TO RECOGNIZE CELEBRITIES.
MENUS
THIS WAY PLEASE, MISS DICKINSON, MR. HAMILL, AND, UHH... WHATEVER.

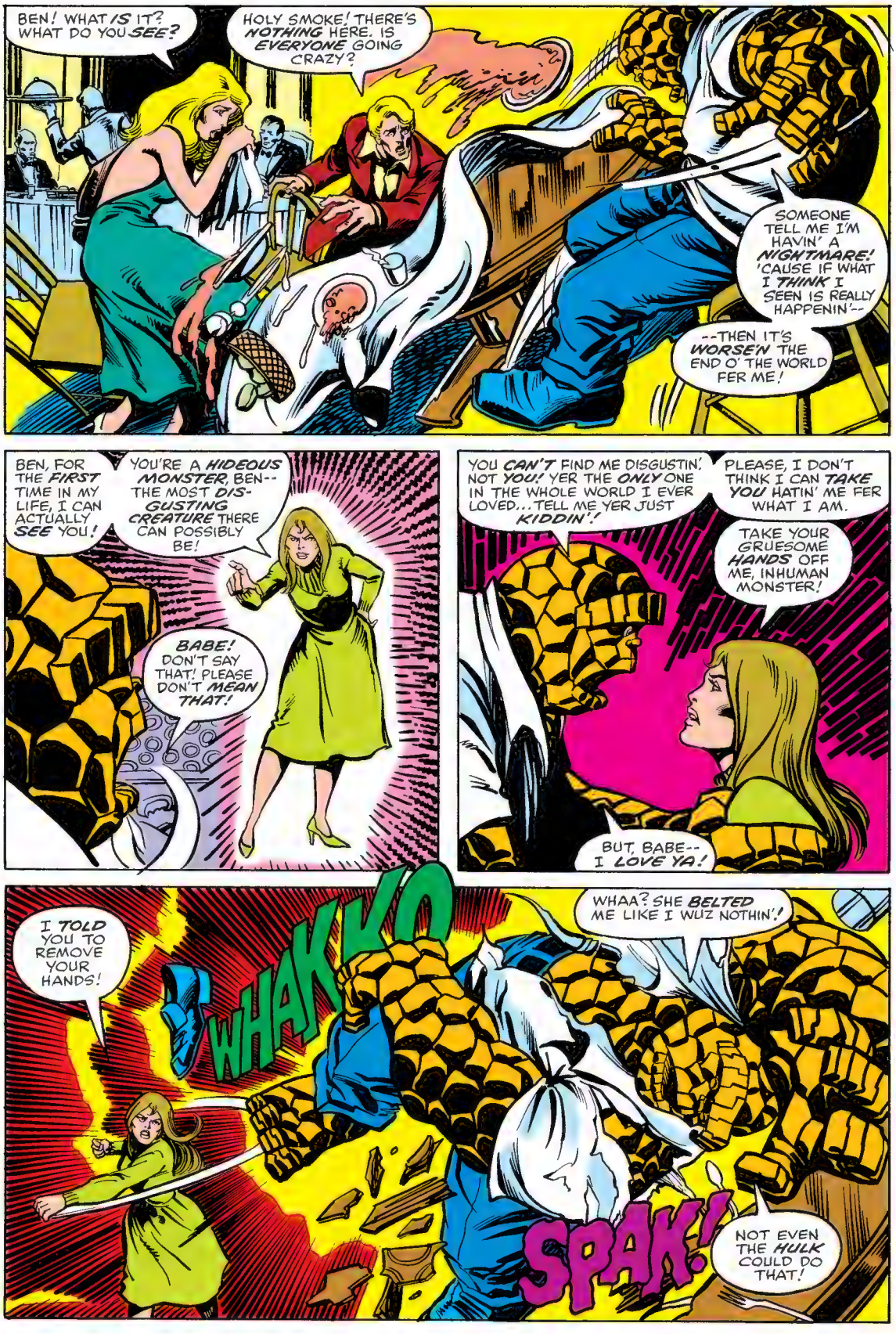

A COLD STARE FROM SUE CALMS BEN'S QUICKLY GROWING TEMPER, THEN...
I'LL HAVE THE FETUCCINI ALFREDO, PLEASE.
VERY GOOD, MADAME. BY THE WAY, I DO SO ENJOY YOUR TV SHOW, MISS SHORE.
OH WELL, SO FLEETING IS FAME.

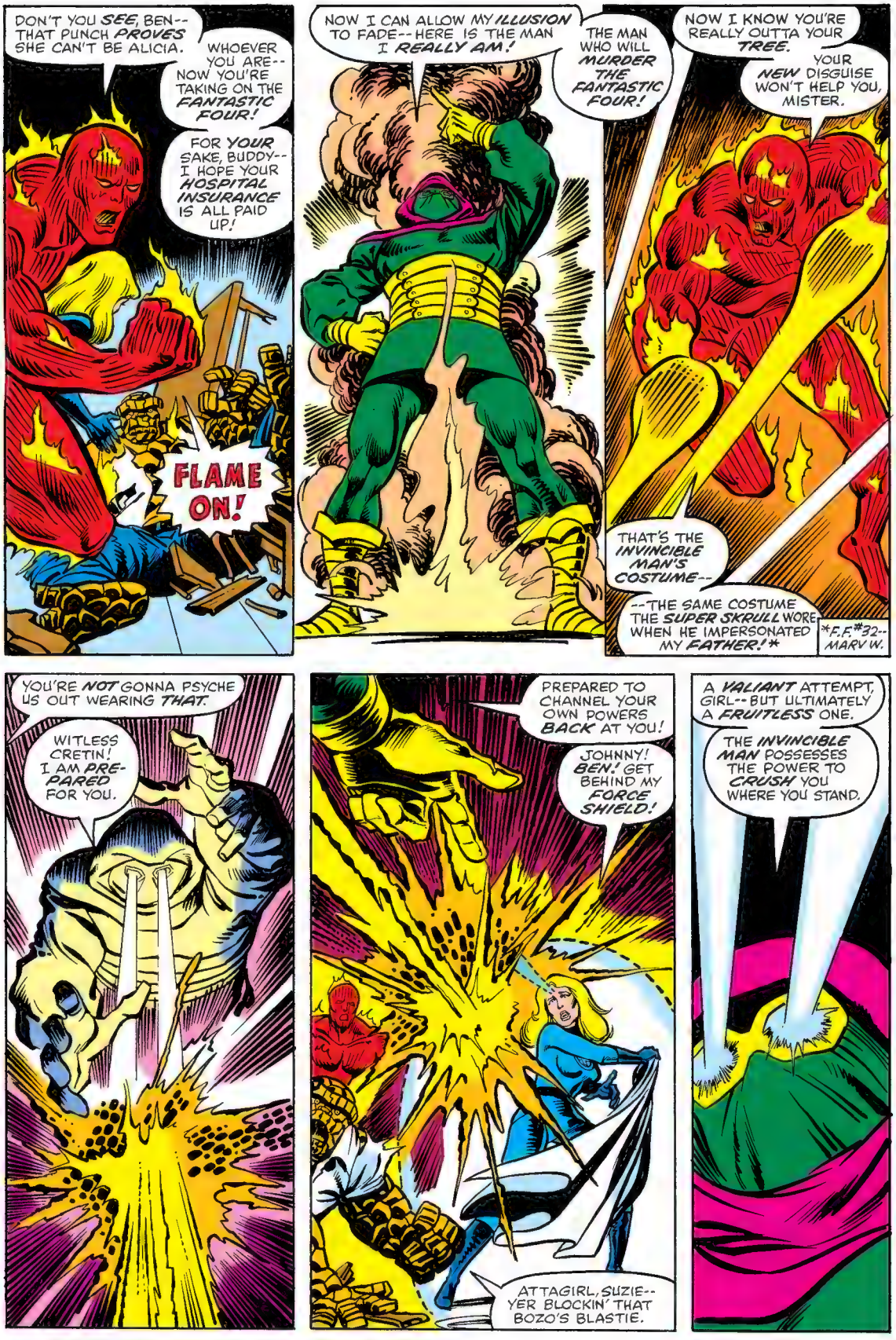

YOUR DINNER, MISS McGRAW. THE FILET FOR MR. CASSIDY, AND THE... HAMBURGER FOR...UHHH, YOU!
WANNA MAKE SOMETHIN' OF IT, SMILEY?
YOU'RE LUCKY, BEN. HE COULD'A CALLED YOU MR. KONG.
HARDEE HAR HAR, JUNIOR.

BUT, AS DINNER GETS UNDERWAY...
TH-THAT FACE! NO... NO! IT CAN'T BE!
SIS, WHAT IS IT?

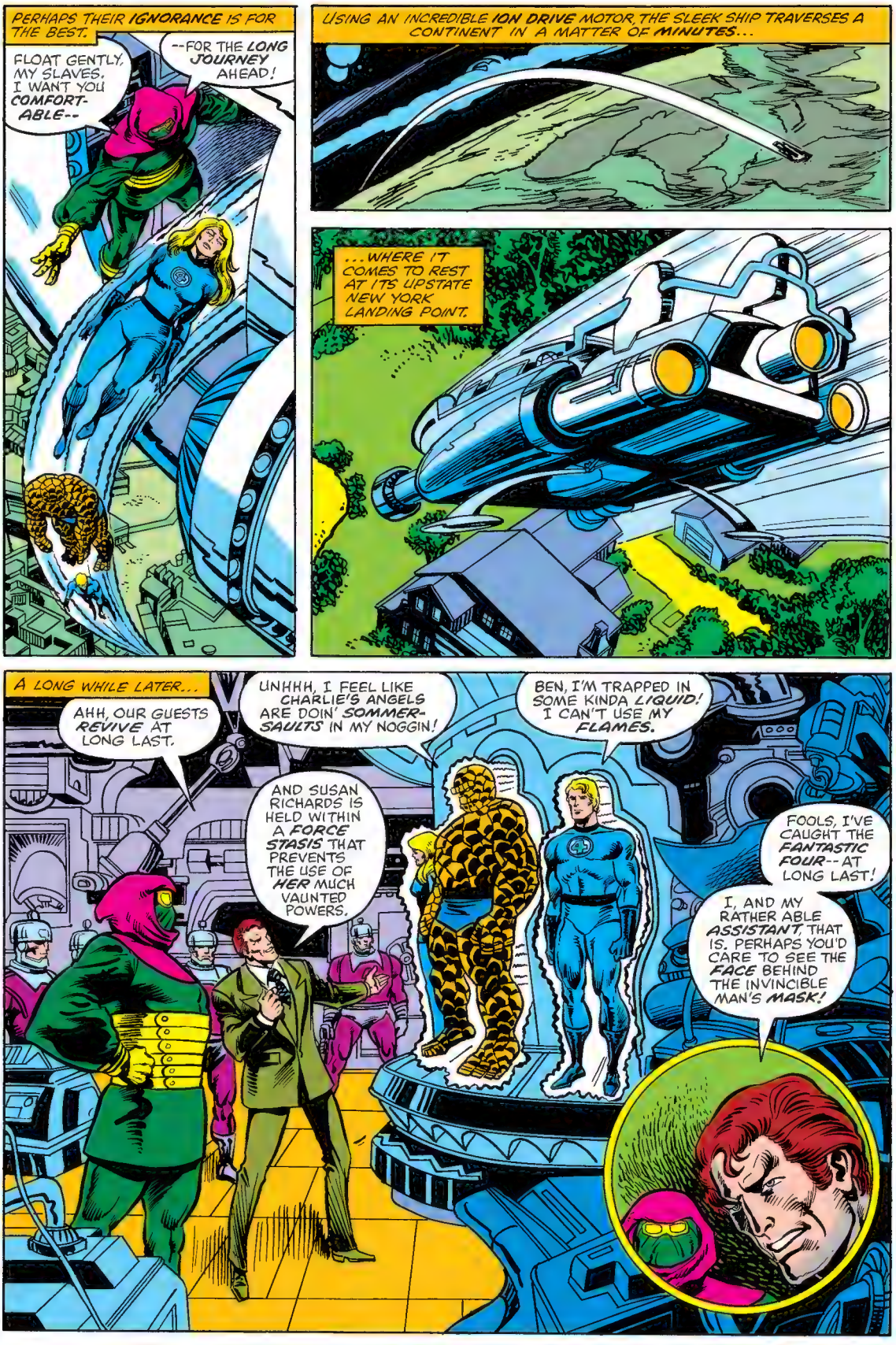

J-JOHNNY, I SWEAR... I SAW DAD'S FACE!
C'MON, SIS, IT MUST BE NERVES. DAD'S DEAD. MAYBE IT WAS SOME-ONE WHO RESEMBLED HIM.
BENJAMIN... BENJAMIN...
SOMEONE CALLIN' ME?


ALICIA? BUT YER IN NEW YORK? WOTTA YA DOIN' IN MY SOU--
I AM HERE, BENJAMIN... AND I CAN AT LAST SEE YOU FOR WHAT YOU ARE
WHAA??

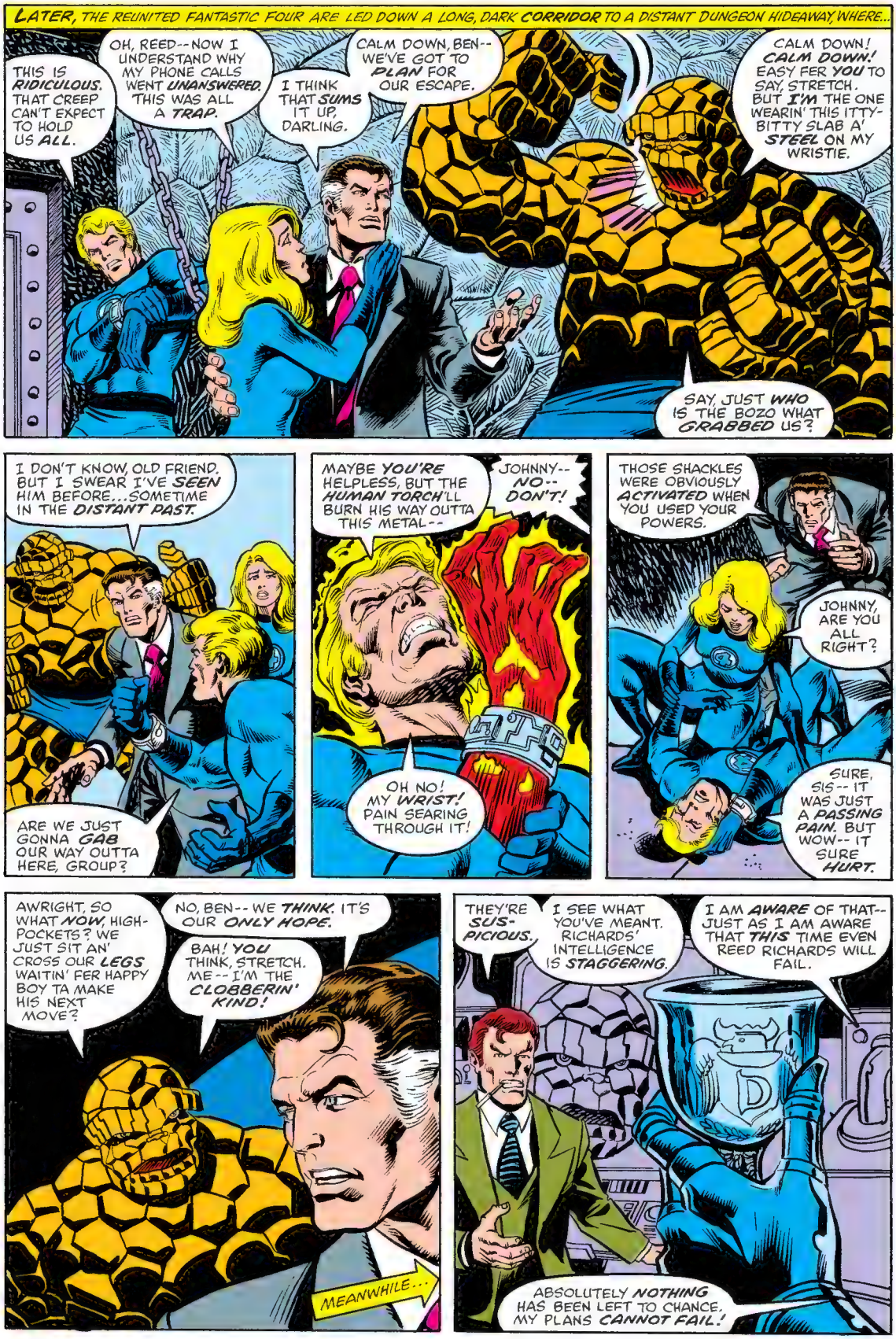

BEN! WHAT IS IT? WHAT DO YOU SEE?
HOLY SMOKE! THERE'S NOTHING HERE. IS EVERYONE GOING CRAZY?
SOMEONE TELL ME I'M HAVIN' A NIGHTMARE! 'CAUSE IF WHAT I THINK I SEEN IS REALLY HAPPENIN'--
--THEN IT'S WORSE'N THE END O' THE WORLD FER ME!
BEN, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I CAN ACTUALLY SEE YOU!
YOU'RE A HIDEOUS MONSTER, BEN-- THE MOST DIS-GUSTING CREATURE THERE CAN POSSIBLY BE!
BABE! DON'T SAY THAT! PLEASE DON'T MEAN THAT!
YOU CAN'T FIND ME DISGUSTIN'. NOT YOU! YER THE ONLY ONE IN THE WHOLE WORLD I EVER LOVED...TELL ME YER JUST KIDDIN'!
PLEASE, I DON'T THINK I CAN TAKE YOU HATIN' ME FER WHAT I AM.
TAKE YOUR GRUESOME HANDS OFF ME, INHUMAN MONSTER!
BUT, BABE-- I LOVE YA!
I TOLD YOU TO REMOVE YOUR HANDS!
WHAK
WHAA? SHE BELTED ME LIKE I WUZ NOTHIN'!
SPAK!
NOT EVEN THE HULK COULD DO THAT!

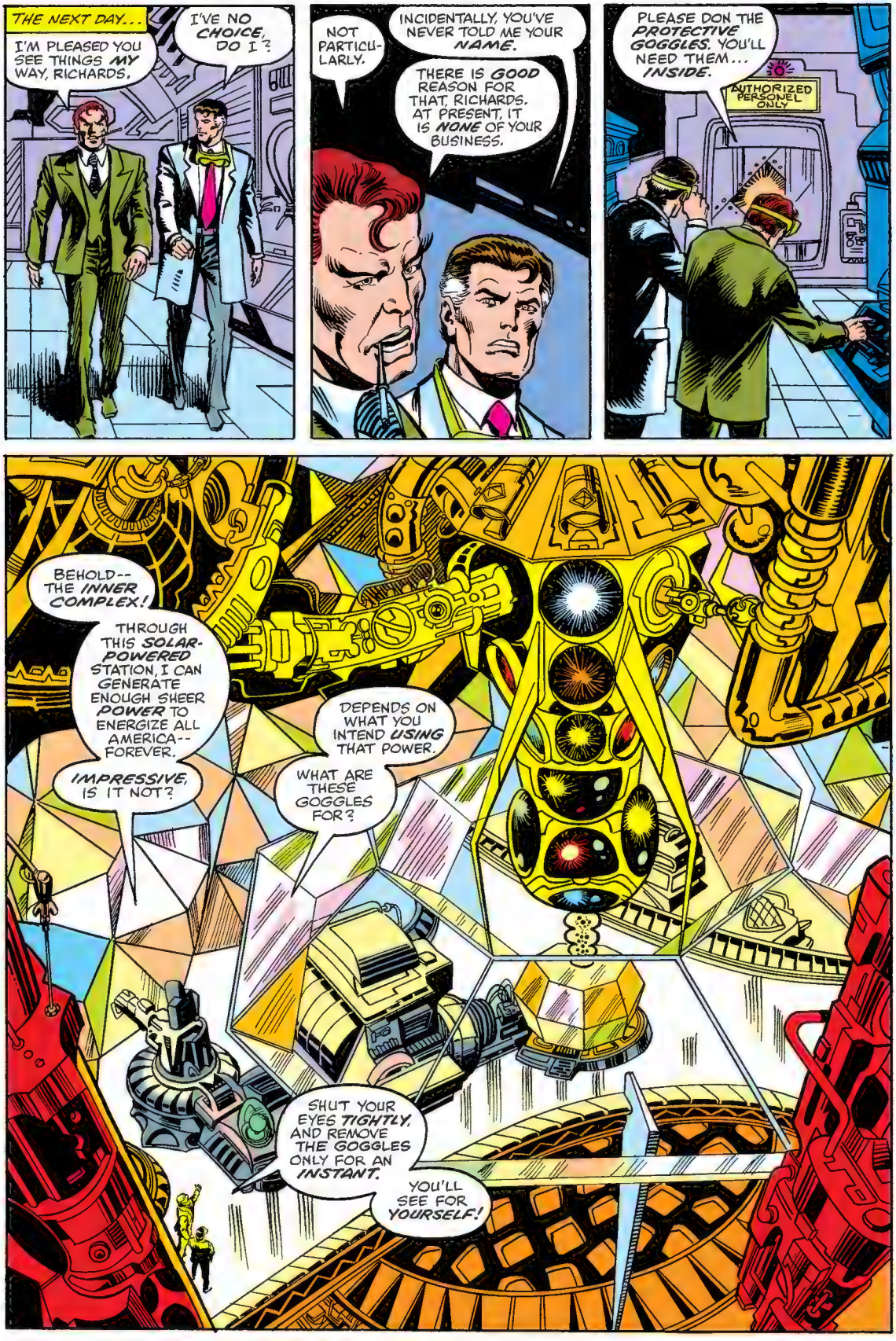

DON'T YOU SEE, BEN--THAT PUNCH PROVES SHE CAN'T BE ALICIA.
WHOEVER YOU ARE--NOW YOU'RE TAKING ON THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
FOR YOUR SAKE, BUDDY--I HOPE YOUR HOSPITAL INSURANCE IS ALL PAID UP!
FLAME ON!
NOW I CAN ALLOW MY ILLUSION TO FADE--HERE IS THE MAN I REALLY AM!
THE MAN WHO WILL MURDER THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
NOW I KNOW YOU'RE REALLY OUTTA YOUR TREE.
YOUR NEW DISGUISE WON'T HELP YOU, MISTER.
THAT'S THE INVINCIBLE MAN'S COSTUME--
--THE SAME COSTUME THE SUPER SKRULL WORE WHEN HE IMPERSONATED MY FATHER!*
*F.F. #32--MARV W.
YOU'RE NOT GONNA PSYCHE US OUT WEARING THAT.
WITLESS CRETIN! I AM PREPARED FOR YOU.
PREPARED TO CHANNEL YOUR OWN POWERS BACK AT YOU!
JOHNNY! BEN! GET BEHIND MY FORCE SHIELD!
ATTAGIRL, SUZIE--YER BLOCKIN' THAT BOZO'S BLASTIE.
A VALIANT ATTEMPT, GIRL--BUT ULTIMATELY A FRUITLESS ONE.
THE INVINCIBLE MAN POSSESSES THE POWER TO CRUSH YOU WHERE YOU STAND.

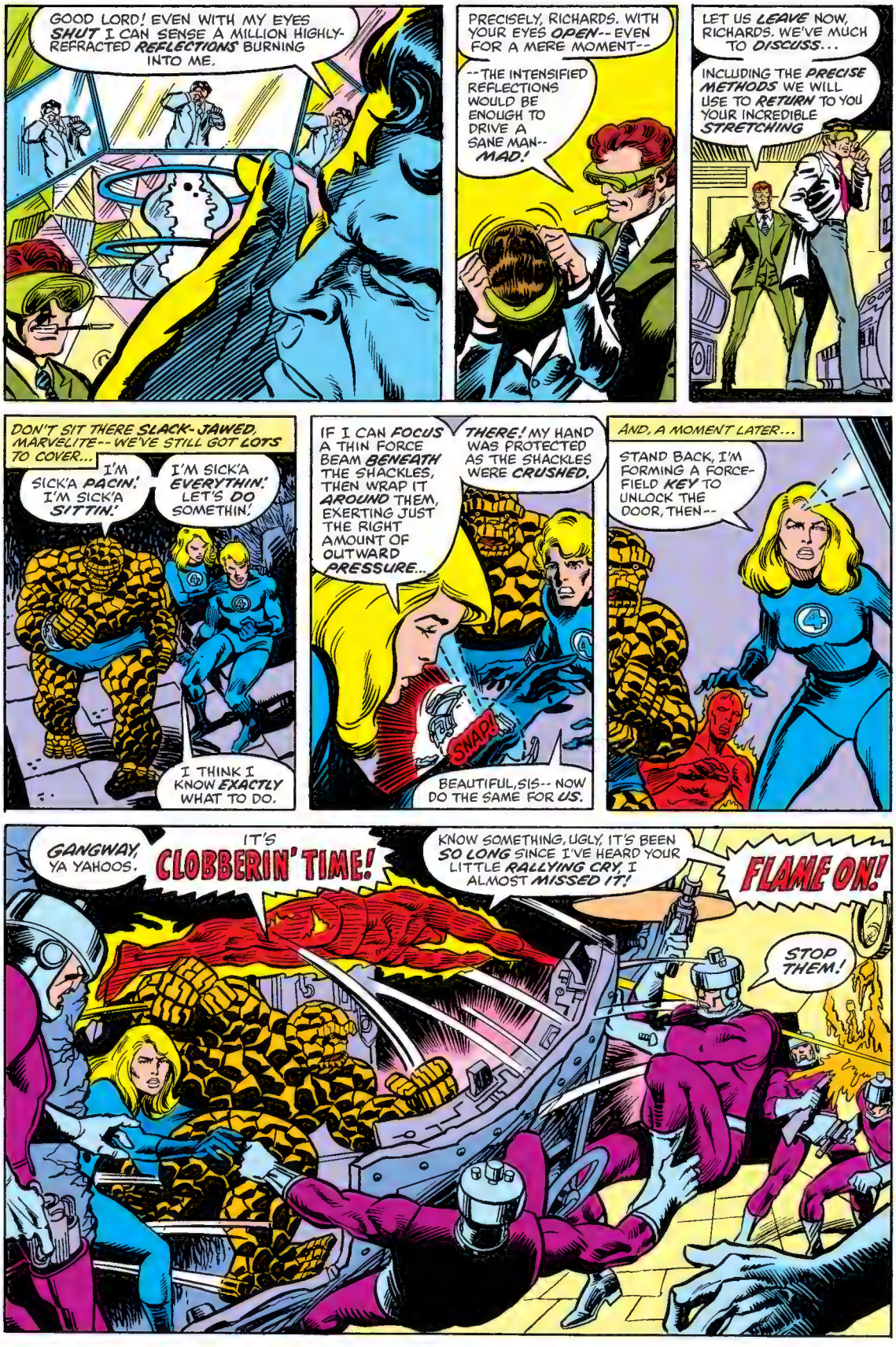
HUH? THAT LITTLE STING'S SUPPOSED TA MAKE US FOLD UP OUR TENT AN' GO HOME?
CAREFUL, BEN-- WE DON'T KNOW WHAT HE'S UP TO.
OH, NO! HE GOT THROUGH MY SHIELD! BUT HOW?
SUDDENLY...
MOMMY! MOMMY! I'M HURTING SO BAD. I WANT YOU, MOMMY.
NO! IT'S LITTLE FRANKLIN.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM? HOW CAN I HELP HIM?
WHILE...
IF I TRY BLASTING HIM AGAIN, HE'LL TURN MY POWER BACK ON US!
C-CAN'T I DO ANYTHING TO STOP HIM?
AM I-- USELESS? WHY AM I DOUBTING MYSELF?
AND...
SUDDENLY I HATE EVERYTHIN'.
WANNA SMASH UP THIS DING-BLASTED RESTAURANT!
WHAMM
NOW, WHILE THE RAW EMOTIONS OF FEAR, DOUBT AND HATRED PLAGUE YOU--
--YOU WILL BE EASY PREY FOR THE POWER OF THE INVINCIBLE MAN!
SPAMM
UNCONSCIOUS--AS I KNEW YOU WOULD BE.
NOW, TO MY SHIP!
HELPLESS, SUE, JOHNNY AND BEN FLOAT ABOVE A SEEMINGLY OBLIVIOUS CROWD OF RESTAURANT GOERS. NOT ONE HAS SEEN THE FIGHT THAT HAD JUST ENDED, NOR ARE THEY AWARE THAT THERE ARE THREE LESS CUSTOMERS AMONGST THEM.

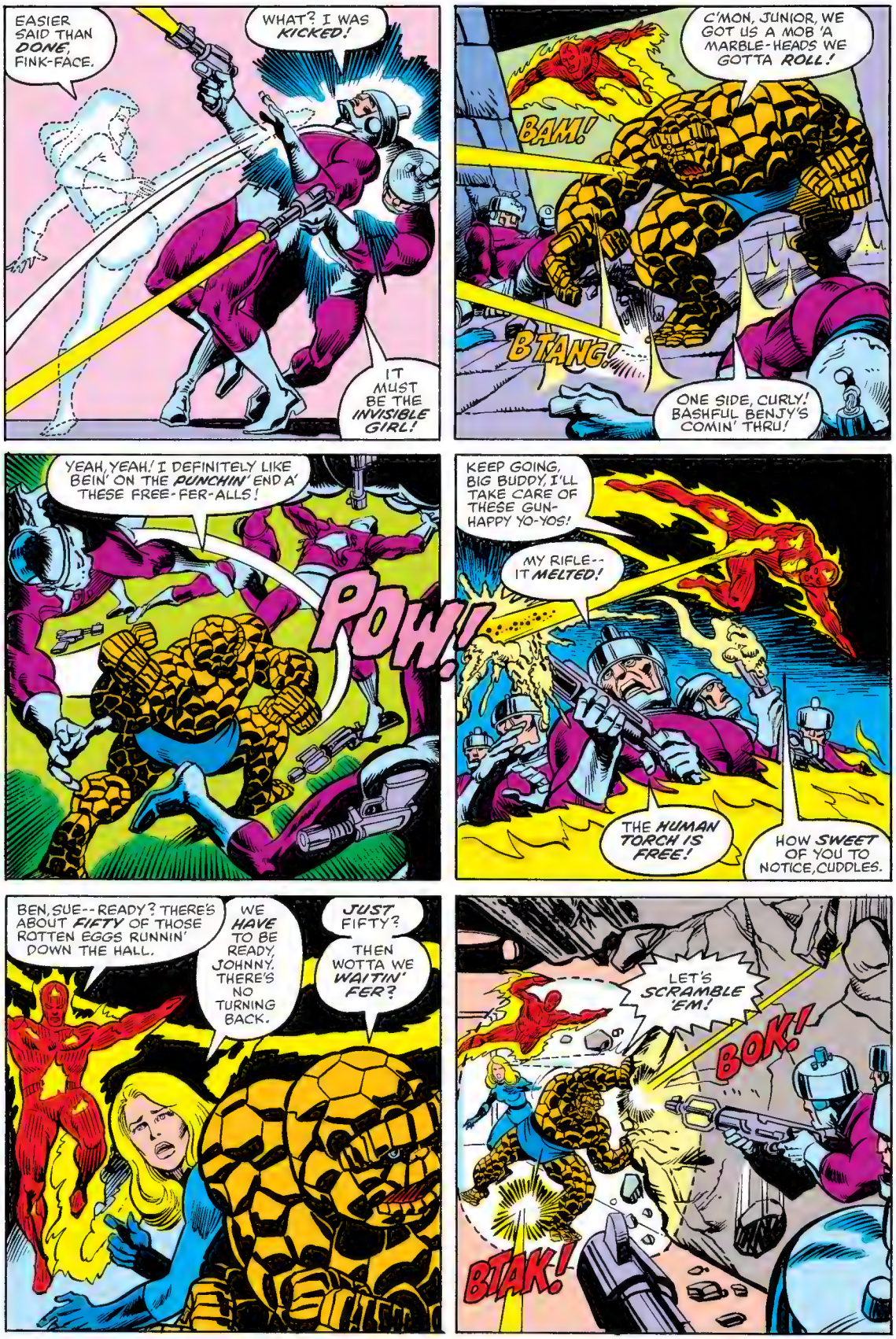

PERHAPS THEIR IGNORANCE IS FOR THE BEST.
FLOAT GENTLY, MY SLAVES. I WANT YOU COMFORT-ABLE--
--FOR THE LONG JOURNEY AHEAD!
USING AN INCREDIBLE ION DRIVE MOTOR, THE SLEEK SHIP TRAVERSES A CONTINENT IN A MATTER OF MINUTES...
...WHERE IT COMES TO REST AT ITS UPSTATE NEW YORK LANDING POINT.
A LONG WHILE LATER...
AHH, OUR GUESTS REVIVE AT LONG LAST.
UNHHH, I FEEL LIKE CHARLIE'S ANGELS ARE DOIN' SOMMER-SAULTS IN MY NOGGIN!
BEN, I'M TRAPPED IN SOME KINDA LIQUID! I CAN'T USE MY FLAMES.
AND SUSAN RICHARDS IS HELD WITHIN A FORCE STASIS THAT PREVENTS THE USE OF HER MUCH VAUNTED POWERS.
FOOLS, I'VE CAUGHT THE FANTASTIC FOUR--AT LONG LAST!
I, AND MY RATHER ABLE ASSISTANT, THAT IS. PERHAPS YOU'D CARE TO SEE THE FACE BEHIND THE INVINCIBLE MAN'S MASK!

A SOFT MOCKING CHUCKLE FILLS THE AIR, AND THEN...
LOOK AT THE ONE WHO DE-FEATED YOU!
STRETCHO?!?
HOW IN THE NAME 'A SAM HILL?
THE ANSWER, YOU LUMBERING BUFFOON--IS THROUGH MY HYPNO-PERSUADER!
THAT, AND THE RECONSTRUCTED INVINCIBLE MAN UNIFORM I PERSONALLY CREATED.
AWAKEN NOW, RICHARDS--!
MY HEAD... YOU?
WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME?
NOTHING YET, OLD FRIEND--BUT I SHALL--
--UNLESS YOU GIVE ME YOUR UN-QUALIFIED COOPERATION.
THOSE PLANS...
I THOUGHT YOUR MACHINE LOOKED FAMILIAR, NOW I UNDERSTAND. BUT--?
BUT YOU'RE CRAZY IF YOU THINK I'LL HELP YOU WHILE MY FRIENDS ARE KEPT PRISONER.
IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE I HOLD THEIR LIVES IN MY HANDS THAT YOU WILL ASSIST ME, RICHARDS.
BESIDES, YOU ONLY HELP YOURSELF...AS YOU CAN SEE. I HAVE THE FINANCIAL BACKING...YOU HAVE THE VITAL ELEMENT I NEED TO PERFECT MY CREATION.
STRETCHO--DON'T AGREE TA NOTHIN'!
YER EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED BUDDY'S FREE.
AN' THIS TIME THERE AIN'T NOTHIN' THAT'S GONNA--
YEEOWWW!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HIM?
I'VE MERELY PLACED AN ELECTRONIC SHACKLE ON HIS WRIST.

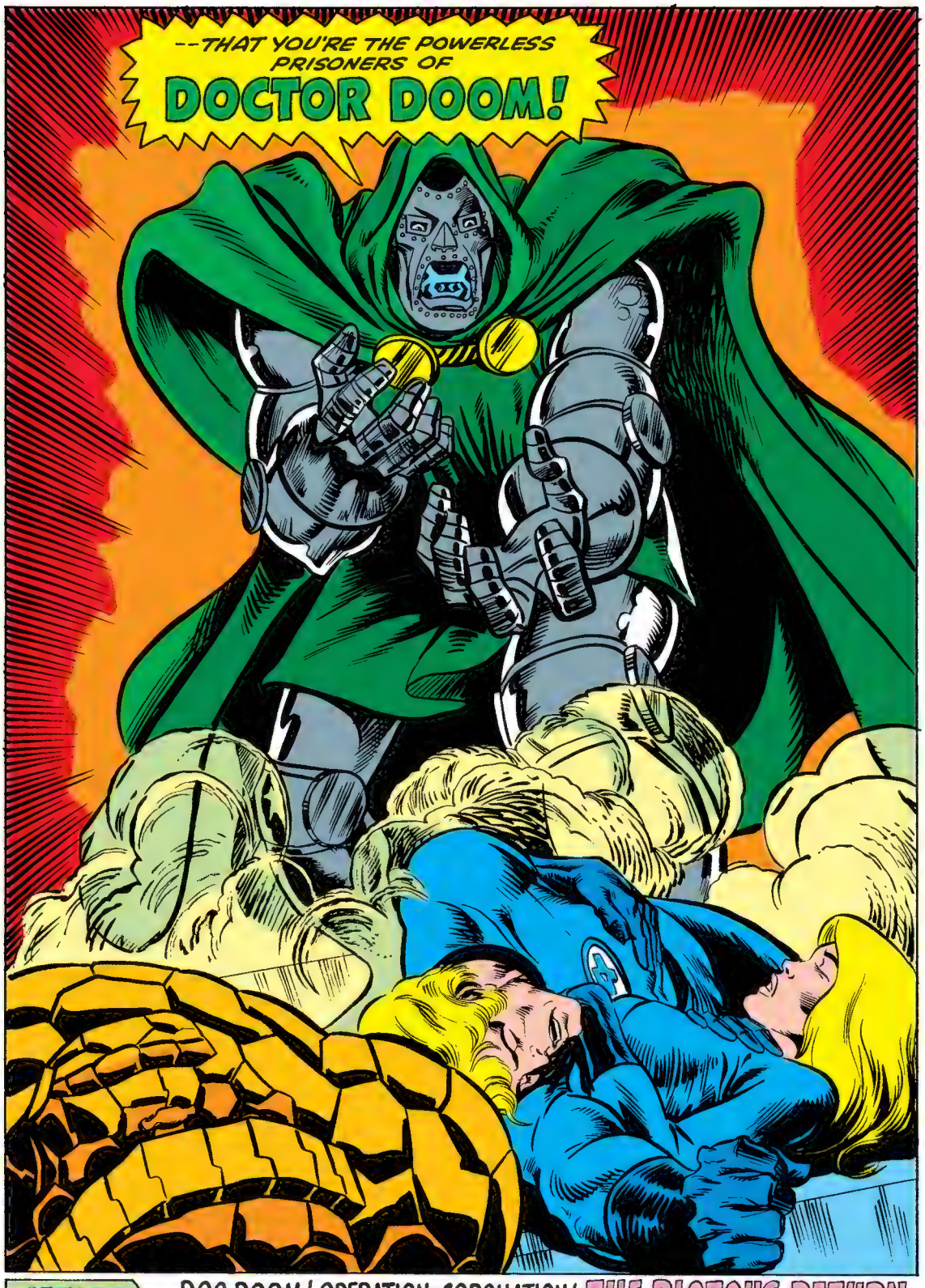

LATER, THE REUNITED FANTASTIC FOUR ARE LED DOWN A LONG, DARK CORRIDOR TO A DISTANT DUNGEON HIDEAWAY, WHERE...
THIS IS RIDICULOUS. THAT CREEP CAN'T EXPECT TO HOLD US ALL.
OH, REED--NOW I UNDERSTAND WHY MY PHONE CALLS WENT UNANSWERED. THIS WAS ALL A TRAP.
I THINK THAT SUMS IT UP, DARLING.
CALM DOWN, BEN--WE'VE GOT TO PLAN FOR OUR ESCAPE.
CALM DOWN! CALM DOWN! EASY FER YOU TO SAY, STRETCH. BUT I'M THE ONE WEARIN' THIS ITTY-BITTY SLAB A' STEEL ON MY WRISTIE.
SAY, JUST WHO IS THE BOZO WHAT GRABBED US?
I DON'T KNOW, OLD FRIEND. BUT I SWEAR I'VE SEEN HIM BEFORE...SOMETIME IN THE DISTANT PAST.
ARE WE JUST GONNA GAB OUR WAY OUTTA HERE, GROUP?
MAYBE YOU'RE HELPLESS, BUT THE HUMAN TORCH'LL BURN HIS WAY OUTTA THIS METAL--
JOHNNY--NO--DON'T!
OH NO! MY WRIST! PAIN SEARING THROUGH IT!
THOSE SHACKLES WERE OBVIOUSLY ACTIVATED WHEN YOU USED YOUR POWERS.
JOHNNY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
SURE, SIS--IT WAS JUST A PASSING PAIN. BUT WOW--IT SURE HURT.
AWRIGHT, SO WHAT NOW, HIGH-POCKETS? WE JUST SIT AN' CROSS OUR LEGS WAITIN' FER HAPPY BOY TA MAKE HIS NEXT MOVE?
NO, BEN--WE THINK. IT'S OUR ONLY HOPE.
BAH! YOU THINK, STRETCH. ME--I'M THE CLOBBERIN' KIND!
MEANWHILE...
THEY'RE SUS-PICIOUS.
I SEE WHAT YOU'VE MEANT. RICHARDS' INTELLIGENCE IS STAGGERING.
I AM AWARE OF THAT--JUST AS I AM AWARE THAT THIS TIME EVEN REED RICHARDS WILL FAIL.
ABSOLUTELY NOTHING HAS BEEN LEFT TO CHANCE. MY PLANS CANNOT FAIL!


THE NEXT DAY...
I'M PLEASED YOU SEE THINGS MY WAY, RICHARDS.
I'VE NO CHOICE, DO I?
NOT PARTICULARLY.
INCIDENTALLY, YOU'VE NEVER TOLD ME YOUR NAME.
THERE IS GOOD REASON FOR THAT, RICHARDS. AT PRESENT, IT IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.
PLEASE DON THE PROTECTIVE GOGGLES. YOU'LL NEED THEM... INSIDE.
AUTHORIZED PERSONEL ONLY
BEHOLD-- THE INNER COMPLEX!
THROUGH THIS SOLAR-POWERED STATION, I CAN GENERATE ENOUGH SHEER POWER TO ENERGIZE ALL AMERICA-- FOREVER.
IMPRESSIVE, IS IT NOT?
DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU INTEND USING THAT POWER.
WHAT ARE THESE GOGGLES FOR?
SHUT YOUR EYES TIGHTLY, AND REMOVE THE GOGGLES ONLY FOR AN INSTANT.
YOU'LL SEE FOR YOURSELF!


GOOD LORD! EVEN WITH MY EYES SHUT I CAN SENSE A MILLION HIGHLY-REFRACTED REFLECTIONS BURNING INTO ME.
PRECISELY, RICHARDS. WITH YOUR EYES OPEN-- EVEN FOR A MERE MOMENT--
--THE INTENSIFIED REFLECTIONS WOULD BE ENOUGH TO DRIVE A SANE MAN-- MAD!
LET US LEAVE NOW, RICHARDS. WE'VE MUCH TO DISCUSS...
INCLUDING THE PRECISE METHODS WE WILL USE TO RETURN TO YOU YOUR INCREDIBLE STRETCHING
DON'T SIT THERE SLACK-JAWED, MARVELITE-- WE'VE STILL GOT LOTS TO COVER...
I'M SICK'A PACIN'. I'M SICK'A SITTIN'.
I'M SICK'A EVERYTHIN'. LET'S DO SOMETHIN'.
I THINK I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT TO DO.
IF I CAN FOCUS A THIN FORCE BEAM BENEATH THE SHACKLES, THEN WRAP IT AROUND THEM, EXERTING JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF OUTWARD PRESSURE...
THERE! MY HAND WAS PROTECTED AS THE SHACKLES WERE CRUSHED.
SNAP!
BEAUTIFUL, SIS-- NOW DO THE SAME FOR US.
AND, A MOMENT LATER...
STAND BACK, I'M FORMING A FORCE-FIELD KEY TO UNLOCK THE DOOR, THEN--
GANGWAY, YA YAHOOS.
IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!
KNOW SOMETHING, UGLY, IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE HEARD YOUR LITTLE RALLYING CRY, I ALMOST MISSED IT!
FLAME ON!
STOP THEM!


EASIER SAID THAN DONE, FINK-FACE.
WHAT? I WAS KICKED!
IT MUST BE THE INVISIBLE GIRL!
C'MON, JUNIOR, WE GOT US A MOB 'A MARBLE-HEADS WE GOTTA ROLL!
BAM!
BTANG!
ONE SIDE, CURLY! BASHFUL BENJY'S COMIN' THRU!
YEAH, YEAH! I DEFINITELY LIKE BEIN' ON THE PUNCHIN' END A' THESE FREE-FER-ALLS!
POW!
KEEP GOING, BIG BUDDY, I'LL TAKE CARE OF THESE GUN-HAPPY YO-YOS!
MY RIFLE-- IT MELTED!
THE HUMAN TORCH IS FREE!
HOW SWEET OF YOU TO NOTICE, CUDDLES.
BEN, SUE-- READY? THERE'S ABOUT FIFTY OF THOSE ROTTEN EGGS RUNNIN' DOWN THE HALL.
WE HAVE TO BE READY, JOHNNY. THERE'S NO TURNING BACK.
JUST FIFTY?
THEN WOTTA WE WAITIN' FER?
LET'S SCRAMBLE 'EM!
BOK!
BTAK!

LOOKS LIKE THAT CHICKEN LITTLE FELLA WUZ RIGHT AFTER ALL.
THE SKY IS FALLIN'!
CATCH MY MEANIN', BUNKIES?
BEN, STOP PLAYING WITH THEM-- LET'S GO!
SKRUNCHH!
AW, THERE YA GO SPOILIN' ALL MY FUN AGAIN.
DON'T COMPLAIN, BEN-- LET'S FIND A WAY OUT OF HERE--
--WHERE WE CAN WORK OUT OUR PLANS FOR RESCUING REED!
HOLD IT, SUZIE, JUST IN CASE THAT THERE DOOR'S BEEN RIGGED, LEMME ENTER.
SURPRISED, DOLTS? DID YOU THINK I ACTUALLY WOULD PERMIT YOU TO ESCAPE?
THIS WAS ALL ARRANGED TO SHOW YOU HOW POWERLESS YOU TRULY ARE.
YOU? I NEVER EXPECTED...
FIGGERS-- IT COULD'A BEEN NO OTHER CREEPO.
WATCH OUT! LOOK, GAS COMING FROM HIS FINGERTIPS...
SLEEP GAS, MY IMPETUOUS YOUNG HOT-HEAD... ENOUGH TO RENDER ALL THREE OF YOU UNCONSCIOUS.
ENOUGH FOR YOU TO REALIZE ONCE YOU'VE AWAKENED--



NEXT ISSUE:

DOC DOOM! OPERATION: CORONATION!
THE RETURN OF REED'S POWERS!
ALL THIS, AND WOULD'JA BELIEVE:
THE RIOTOUS RETURN OF THE RED GHOST!

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
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FANTASTIC FOUR®
DON'T LOOK SO STARTLED, YOU STRETCHING FOOL! THE RED GHOST IS BACK!
AT LONG LAST! THE RETURN OF REED RICHARDS' SUPER-POWERS!
NOW NOTHING CAN STOP ME FROM DESTROYING YOU!!
PEREZ & GINNOT

A brilliant scientist— his best friend— the woman he loves— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human!

MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! Now they are the FANTASTIC FOUR— and the world will never be the same again!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

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PART 2 OF THE GREATEST F.F. SAGA OF ALL!

THE RIOTOUS RETURN OF THE RED GHOST!

SOMEPLACE IN UPSTATE NEW YORK...

I DON'T LIKE *ANY* OF THIS, WHY ARE YOU *HELPING* ME TO *REGAIN* MY LOST POWERS?

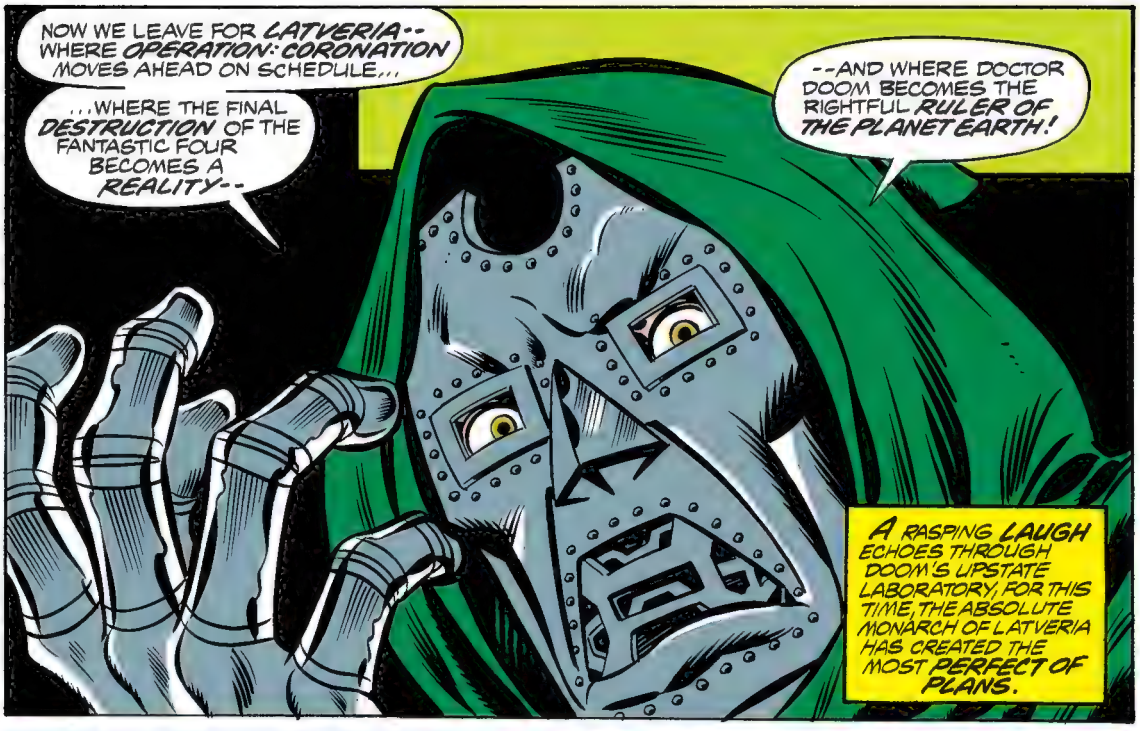
THERE'S NO REASON YOU WOULD OUTLAY A *FORTUNE*-- UNLESS YOU INTEND TO *GET* SOMETHING IN RETURN.

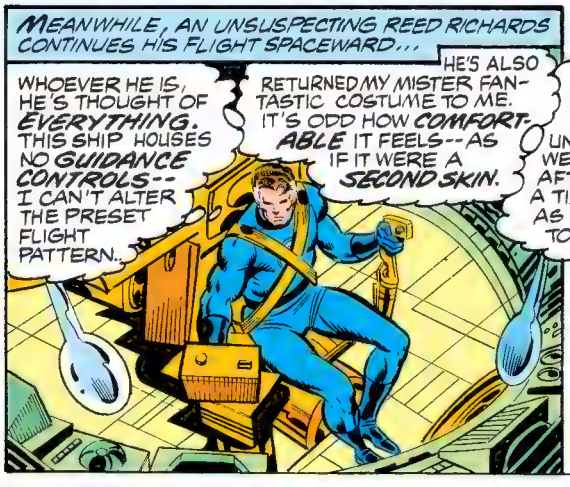
BELIEVE WHATEVER YOU WISH TO, RICHARDS. BUT DON'T *BORE* ME WITH YOUR PARANOID HYPOTHESES.

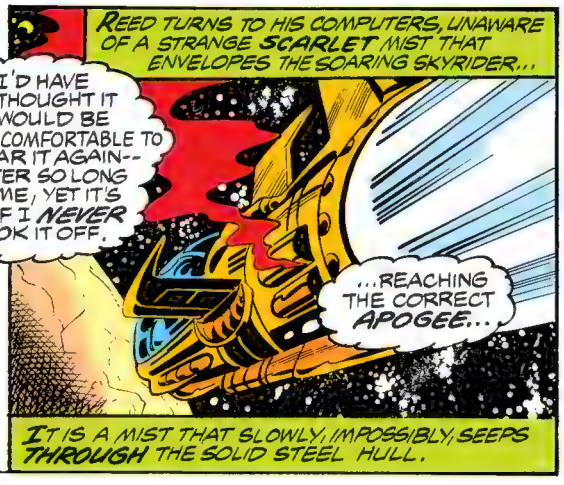
YOU WILL *COMPLETE* OUR DEAL, OR YOUR GOOD FRIENDS WILL BE INSTANTLY *DESTROYED*. IS THAT CLEAR?

ALL *TOO* CLEAR, MISTER.

WHATEVER! WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER, NOW, ARE ALL YOUR CALCULATIONS ACCURATE?
I WOULDN'T RISK MY LIFE IF I HADN'T TRIPLE-CHECKED EVERY-THING.
BEFORE I LIFT OFF, MAY I SEE MY WIFE AND FRIENDS?
IMPOSSIBLE, RICHARDS-- THEY ARE MY PRISON-ERS... AND WILL REMAIN SO UNTIL YOU RETURN-- REPOWERED!
GOOD LUCK, RICH-ARDS.
SAVE YOUR PLEASANTRIES, MISTER. I DON'T WANT THEM.
SOON, ABOARD THE SLEEK SHUTTLE-CRAFT...
HOW DID HE KNOW THAT I'VE BEEN WORKING AND RE-WORKING THESE CALCULATIONS EVER SINCE I BEGAN LOSING MY STRETCHING POWERS?
FOR MONTHS I'VE HYPOTHESIZED HOW TO REGAIN MY POWERS--BUT THE FINANCES NECESSARY TO REALIZE MY DREAMS WERE FAR BEYOND MY MEANS.
I'D NEED THE RESOURCES OF A... SMALL COUNTRY TO BUILD THIS SHIP... TO OUTFIT IT WITH ALL MY SPECIAL MODIFI-CATIONS.
HOW CAN HE AFFORD IT? WHO IS HE? WHY IS HE DOING THIS?
AND WHY DOES HE SEEM SO FAMILIAR? LOOKING AT HIM IS LIKE STARING INTO SOME TIME-SHROUDED MIRROR.
WELL, I'D BEST WORRY ABOUT THAT LATER. ONCE I HAVE MY POWERS, HE WON'T BE ABLE TO ORDER ME ABOUT.
BUT I'D BETTER KEEP A CONSTANT WATCH ON THE COMPU-SCREENS ... ONE SLIGHT MISCALCULATION CAN COST ME MY LIFE!
MEANWHILE, ON EARTH...
HE BOUGHT IT ALL, AND NOW--?

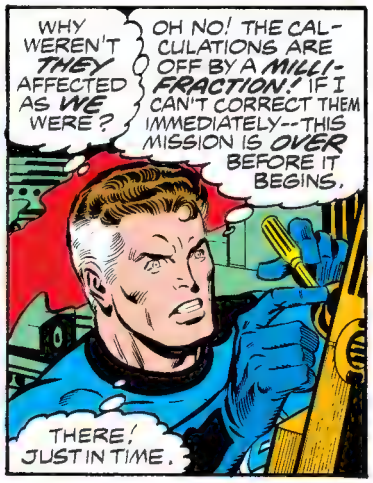

NOW WE LEAVE FOR LATVERIA-- WHERE OPERATION: CORONATION MOVES AHEAD ON SCHEDULE...
...WHERE THE FINAL DESTRUCTION OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR BECOMES A REALITY--
--AND WHERE DOCTOR DOOM BECOMES THE RIGHTFUL RULER OF THE PLANET EARTH!
A RASPING LAUGH ECHOES THROUGH DOOM'S UPSTATE LABORATORY, FOR THIS TIME, THE ABSOLUTE MONARCH OF LATVERIA HAS CREATED THE MOST PERFECT OF PLANS.

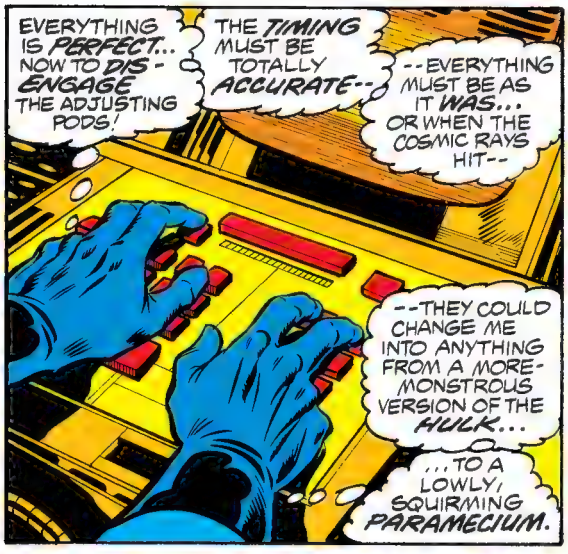

MEANWHILE, AN UNSUSPECTING REED RICHARDS CONTINUES HIS FLIGHT SPACEWARD...
WHOEVER HE IS, HE'S THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING. THIS SHIP HOUSES NO GUIDANCE CONTROLS-- I CAN'T ALTER THE PRESET FLIGHT PATTERN.
HE'S ALSO RETURNED MY MISTER FANTASTIC COSTUME TO ME. IT'S ODD HOW COMFORTABLE IT FEELS-- AS IF IT WERE A SECOND SKIN.
I'D HAVE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE UNCOMFORTABLE TO WEAR IT AGAIN-- AFTER SO LONG A TIME, YET IT'S AS IF I NEVER TOOK IT OFF.

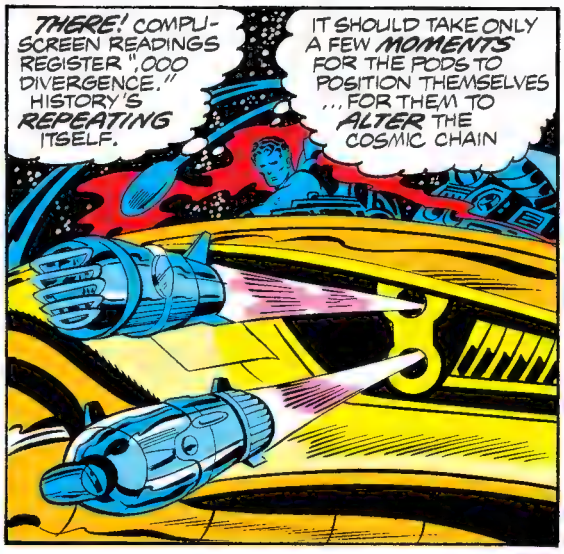

REED TURNS TO HIS COMPUTERS, UNAWARE OF A STRANGE SCARLET MIST THAT ENVELOPES THE SOARING SKYRIDER...
...REACHING THE CORRECT APOGEE...
IT IS A MIST THAT SLOWLY, IMPOSSIBLY, SEEPS THROUGH THE SOLID STEEL HULL.

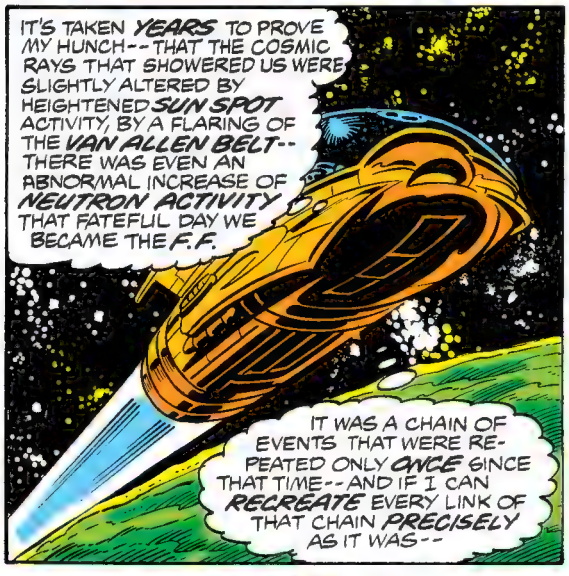
BUT THERE'S STILL TIME BEFORE I UNLEASH THE ADJUSTING PODS.
I'M BEGINNING TO FEEL THE EXCITEMENT OF DISCOVERY... IT'S ALMOST MAKING ME FORGET WHAT AWAITS ME BACK ON EARTH.

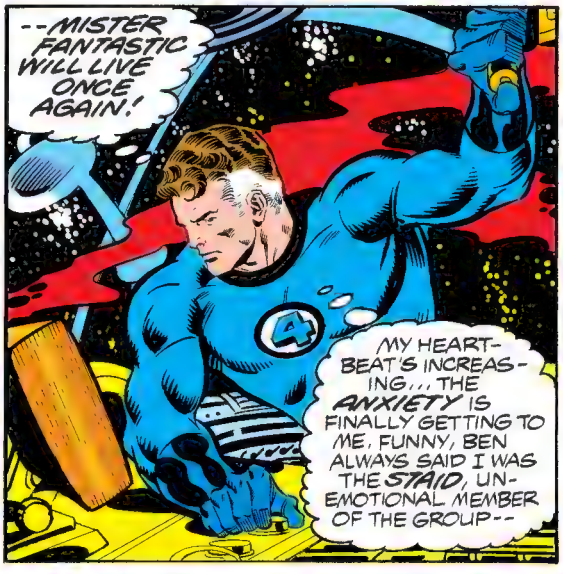
FOR YEARS, I BELIEVED THAT THE COSMIC RAYS ALONE GAVE THE FANTASTIC FOUR OUR INCREDIBLE POWERS.
YET SINCE THOSE DAYS WHEN WE PIONEERED SPACE TRAVEL, THERE HAVE BEEN DOZENS OF SPACE EXPLORERS.


WHY WEREN'T THEY AFFECTED AS WE WERE?
OH NO! THE CALCULATIONS ARE OFF BY A MILLI-FRACTION! IF I CAN'T CORRECT THEM IMMEDIATELY--THIS MISSION IS OVER BEFORE IT BEGINS.
THERE! JUST IN TIME.

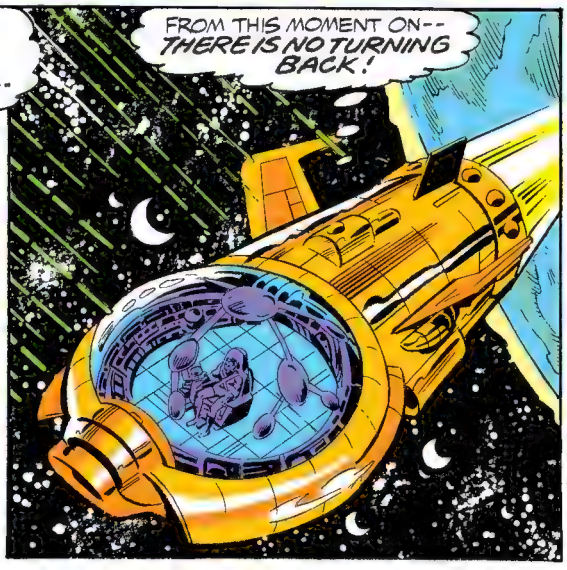

EVERYTHING IS PERFECT... NOW TO DIS-ENGAGE THE ADJUSTING PODS!
THE TIMING MUST BE TOTALLY ACCURATE--
--EVERYTHING MUST BE AS IT WAS... OR WHEN THE COSMIC RAYS HIT--
--THEY COULD CHANGE ME INTO ANYTHING FROM A MORE-MONSTROUS VERSION OF THE HULK...
...TO A LOWLY, SQUIRMING PARAMECIUM.

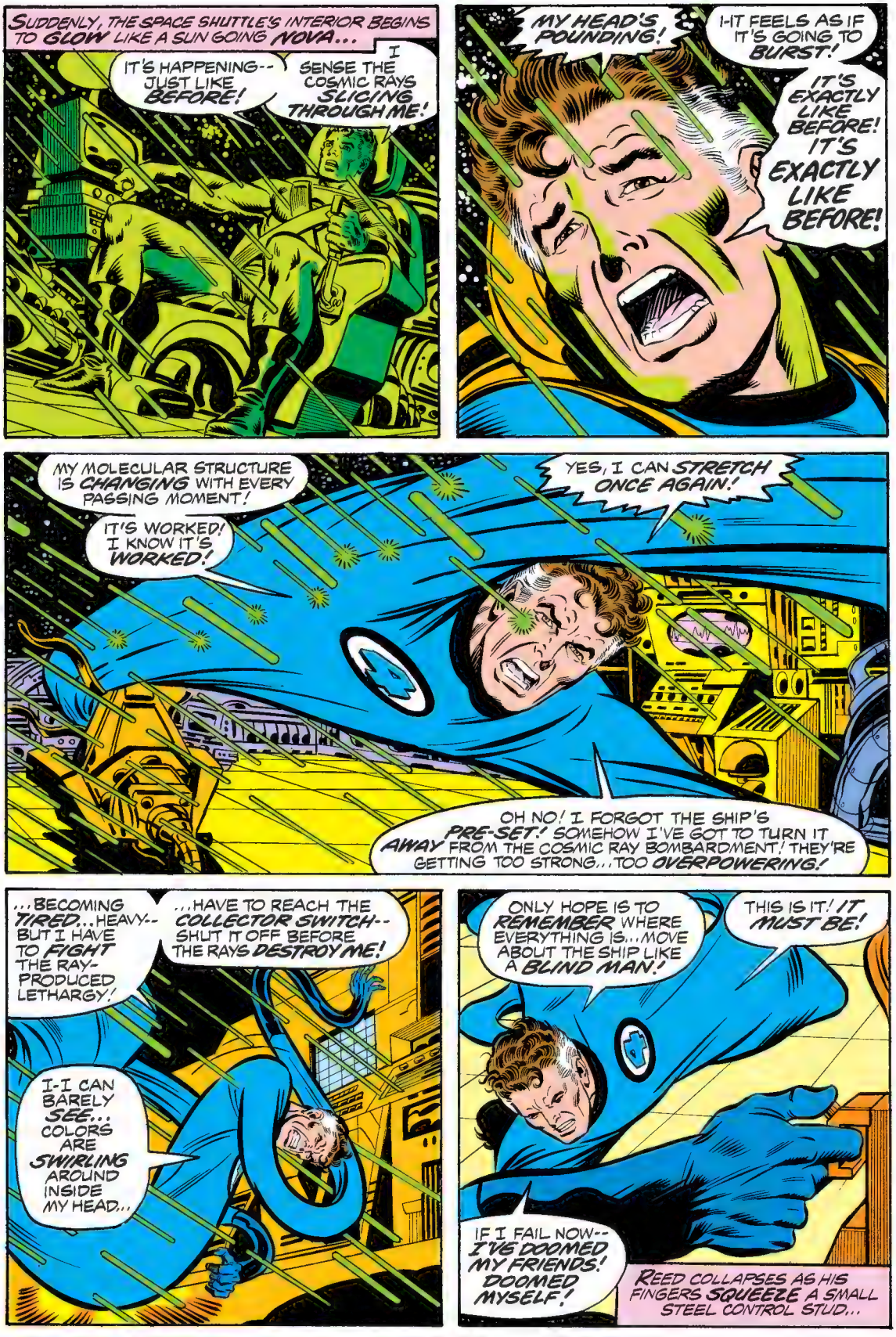

THERE! COMPU-SCREEN READINGS REGISTER ".000 DIVERGENCE." HISTORY'S REPEATING ITSELF.
IT SHOULD TAKE ONLY A FEW MOMENTS FOR THE PODS TO POSITION THEMSELVES ...FOR THEM TO ALTER THE COSMIC CHAIN

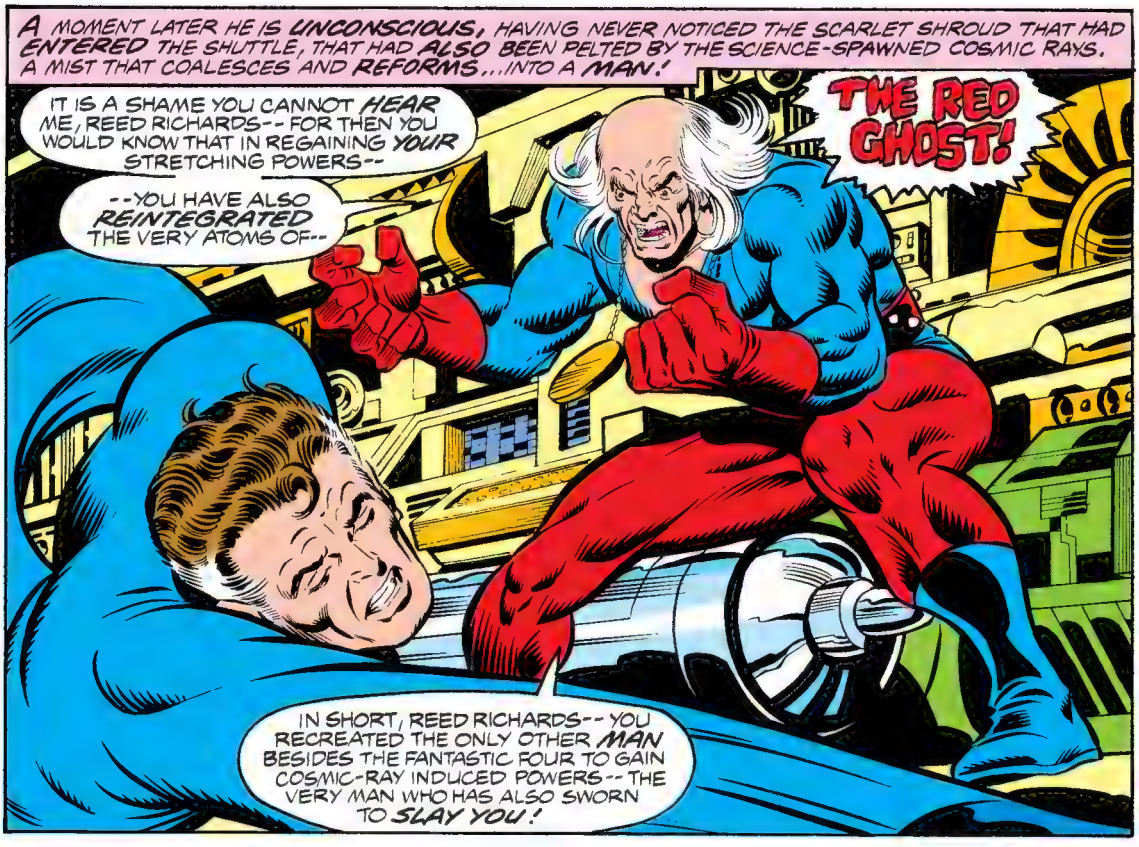

IT'S TAKEN YEARS TO PROVE MY HUNCH--THAT THE COSMIC RAYS THAT SHOWERED US WERE SLIGHTLY ALTERED BY HEIGHTENED SUN SPOT ACTIVITY, BY A FLARING OF THE VAN ALLEN BELT--THERE WAS EVEN AN ABNORMAL INCREASE OF NEUTRON ACTIVITY THAT FATEFUL DAY WE BECAME THE F.F.
IT WAS A CHAIN OF EVENTS THAT WERE RE-PEATED ONLY ONCE SINCE THAT TIME--AND IF I CAN RECREATE EVERY LINK OF THAT CHAIN PRECISELY AS IT WAS--

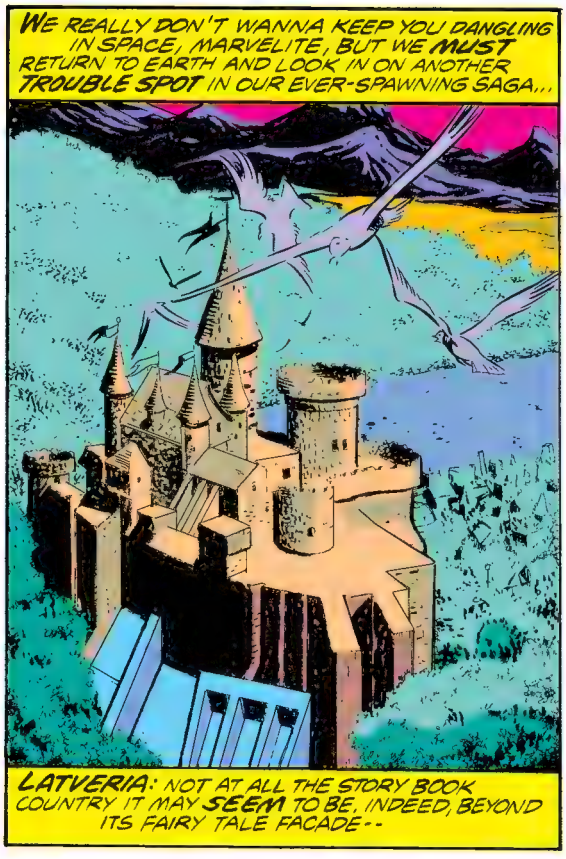

--MISTER FANTASTIC WILL LIVE ONCE AGAIN!
MY HEART-BEAT'S INCREAS-ING... THE ANXIETY IS FINALLY GETTING TO ME. FUNNY, BEN ALWAYS SAID I WAS THE STAID, UN-EMOTIONAL MEMBER OF THE GROUP--

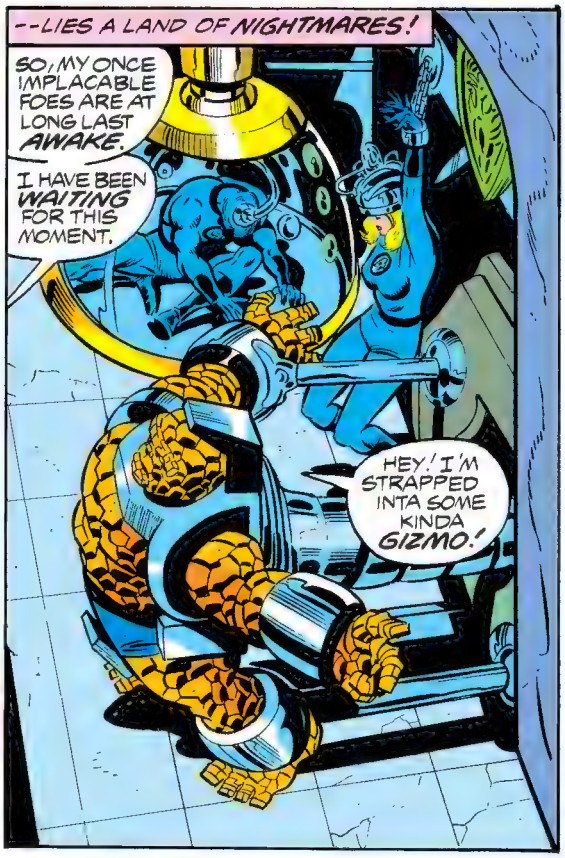
--YET NOW I'M AS NERVOUS AS A TEENAGER OUT ON HIS FIRST DATE.
ALL RIGHT, CALM DOWN NOW--SWITCH ON THE COSMIC RAY COLLECTOR--THEN SIT BACK AND WAIT.


FROM THIS MOMENT ON--THERE IS NO TURNING BACK!

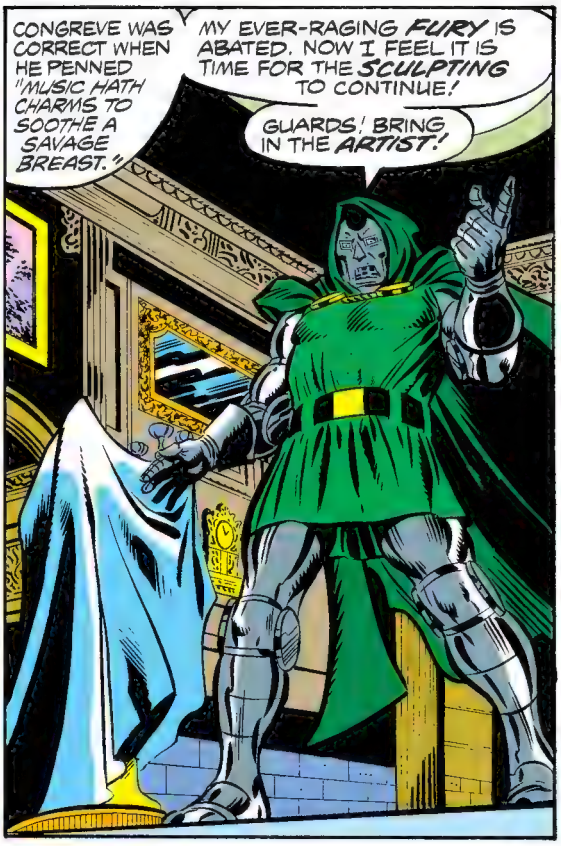

SUDDENLY, THE SPACE SHUTTLE'S INTERIOR BEGINS TO GLOW LIKE A SUN GOING NOVA...
IT'S HAPPENING-- JUST LIKE BEFORE!
I SENSE THE COSMIC RAYS SLICING THROUGH ME!
MY HEAD'S POUNDING!
IT FEELS AS IF IT'S GOING TO BURST!
IT'S EXACTLY LIKE BEFORE!
IT'S EXACTLY LIKE BEFORE!
MY MOLECULAR STRUCTURE IS CHANGING WITH EVERY PASSING MOMENT!
IT'S WORKED! I KNOW IT'S WORKED!
YES, I CAN STRETCH ONCE AGAIN!
OH NO! I FORGOT THE SHIP'S PRE-SET! SOMEHOW I'VE GOT TO TURN IT AWAY FROM THE COSMIC RAY BOMBARDMENT! THEY'RE GETTING TOO STRONG...TOO OVERPOWERING!
...BECOMING TIRED...HEAVY-- BUT I HAVE TO FIGHT THE RAY-PRODUCED LETHARGY!
...HAVE TO REACH THE COLLECTOR SWITCH-- SHUT IT OFF BEFORE THE RAYS DESTROY ME!
I-I CAN BARELY SEE... COLORS ARE SWIRLING AROUND INSIDE MY HEAD...
ONLY HOPE IS TO REMEMBER WHERE EVERYTHING IS...MOVE ABOUT THE SHIP LIKE A BLIND MAN!
THIS IS IT! IT MUST BE!
IF I FAIL NOW-- I'VE DOOMED MY FRIENDS! DOOMED MYSELF!
REED COLLAPSES AS HIS FINGERS SQUEEZE A SMALL STEEL CONTROL STUD...


A MOMENT LATER HE IS UNCONSCIOUS, HAVING NEVER NOTICED THE SCARLET SHROUD THAT HAD ENTERED THE SHUTTLE, THAT HAD ALSO BEEN PELTED BY THE SCIENCE-SPAWNED COSMIC RAYS. A MIST THAT COALESCES AND REFORMS...INTO A MAN!
IT IS A SHAME YOU CANNOT HEAR ME, REED RICHARDS-- FOR THEN YOU WOULD KNOW THAT IN REGAINING YOUR STRETCHING POWERS--
--YOU HAVE ALSO REINTEGRATED THE VERY ATOMS OF--
THE RED GHOST!
IN SHORT, REED RICHARDS-- YOU RECREATED THE ONLY OTHER MAN BESIDES THE FANTASTIC FOUR TO GAIN COSMIC-RAY INDUCED POWERS-- THE VERY MAN WHO HAS ALSO SWORN TO SLAY YOU!


WE REALLY DON'T WANNA KEEP YOU DANGLING IN SPACE, MARVELITE, BUT WE MUST RETURN TO EARTH AND LOOK IN ON ANOTHER TROUBLE SPOT IN OUR EVER-SPAWNING SAGA...
LATVERIA: NOT AT ALL THE STORY BOOK COUNTRY IT MAY SEEM TO BE, INDEED, BEYOND ITS FAIRY TALE FACADE--

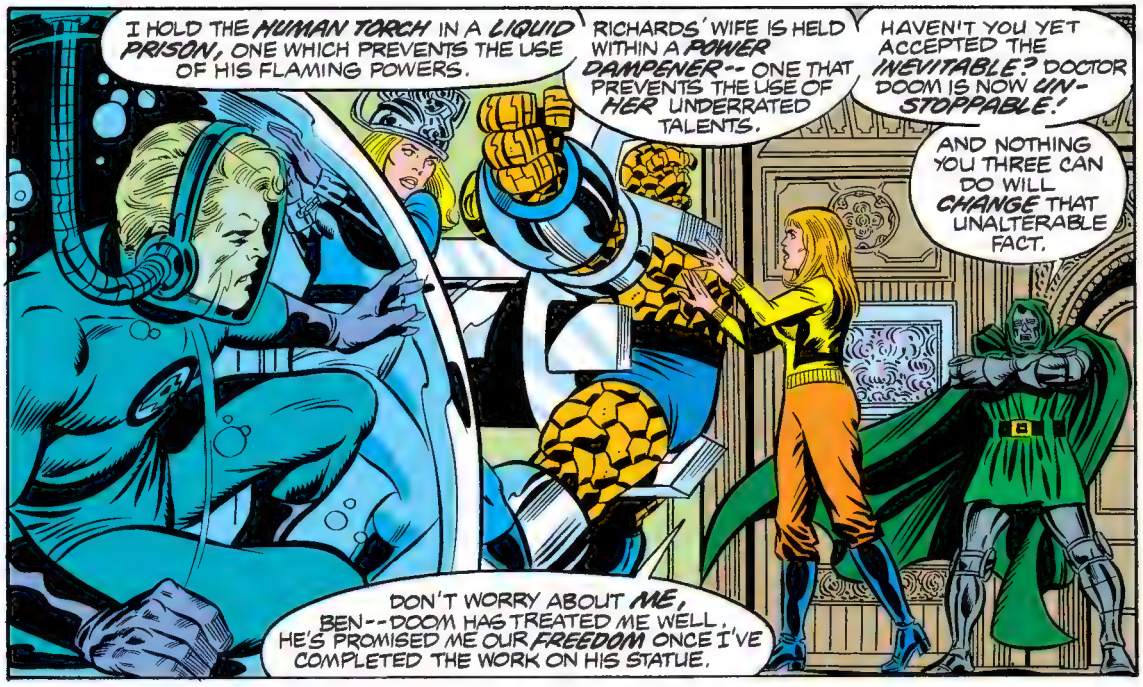

--LIES A LAND OF NIGHTMARES!
SO, MY ONCE IMPLACABLE FOES ARE AT LONG LAST AWAKE.
I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT.
HEY! I'M STRAPPED INTA SOME KINDA GIZMO!

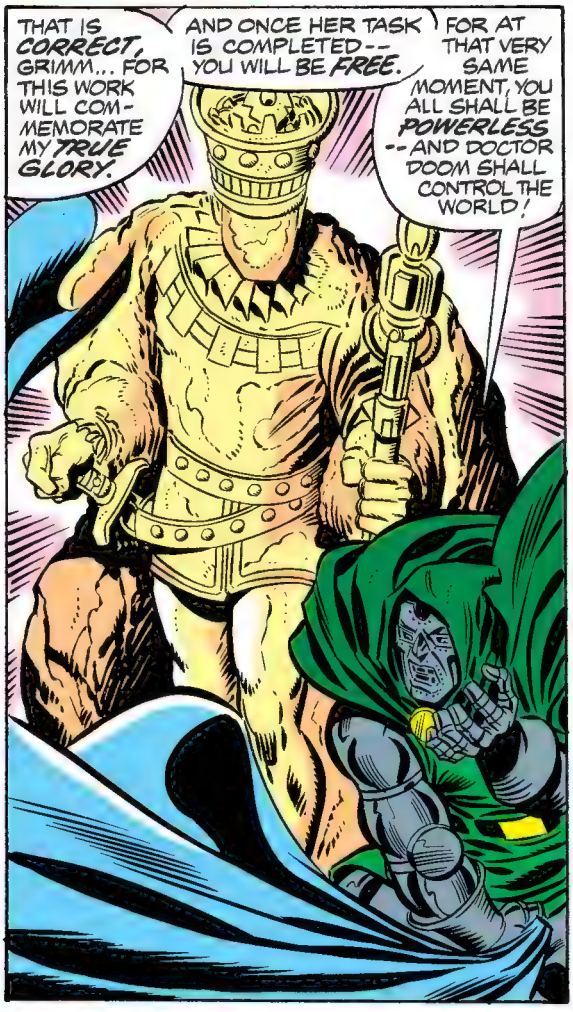
NOT GIZMO, YOU NEANDERTHALIC DOLT. YOU ARE CAPTIVE OF MY POWER COMPRESSOR.
THE MORE ENERGY YOU WASTE STRUGGLING TO ESCAPE, THE MORE POWERFUL IS ITS HOLDING POWER.
SILENCE NOW. I AM BUILDING TO THE CRESCENDO-- I DO NOT WISH IT TO BE DISTURBED.
WAGNER WAS A GENIUS, WAS HE NOT?

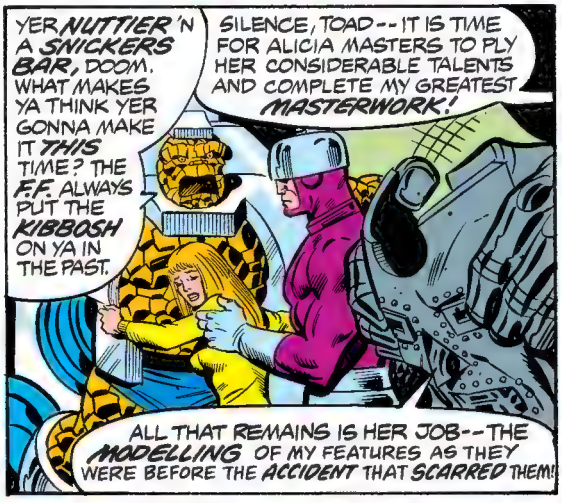

CONGREVE WAS CORRECT WHEN HE PENNED "MUSIC HATH CHARMS TO SOOTHE A SAVAGE BREAST."
MY EVER-RAGING FURY IS ABATED. NOW I FEEL IT IS TIME FOR THE SCULPTING TO CONTINUE!
GUARDS! BRING IN THE ARTIST!

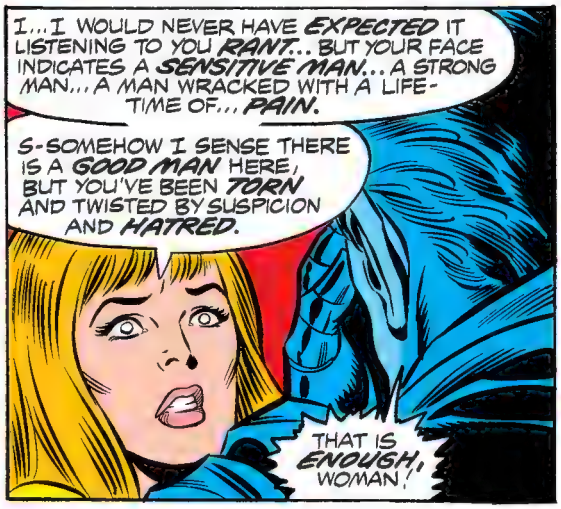
DOOM'S IMPASSIVE GUARDSMEN LEAVE, THEN RETURN A MOMENT LATER WITH--
ALICIA! WHAT HAVE YA DONE TO HER, DOOM?
SPEAK, YA TIN-PLATED TYRANT-- TELL ME!
SHE HAS NOT BEEN HARMED, YOU THICK-HIDED CRETIN. SHE IS A BRILLIANT ARTIST.. AND ALL SUCH SENSITIVES ARE WELCOME IN MY KINGDOM.
BEN? DID YOU SPEAK, MY LOVE? BEN?

I'M RIGHT HERE, BABE, AN' NO ONE, NOT EVEN THAT DARTH VADER REJECT'LL KEEP ME FROM YA--
BLAZES! THESE SHACKLES AIN'T EVEN BUCKLIN'! BUT NOTHIN' CAN HOLD ME THIS WAY-- NOTHIN'!
YOU LUMBERING LUMMOX! IS IT NOT EVIDENT THAT MY POWER COMPRESSOR CANNOT BE OVERWHELMED BY BRUTE FORCE ALONE?

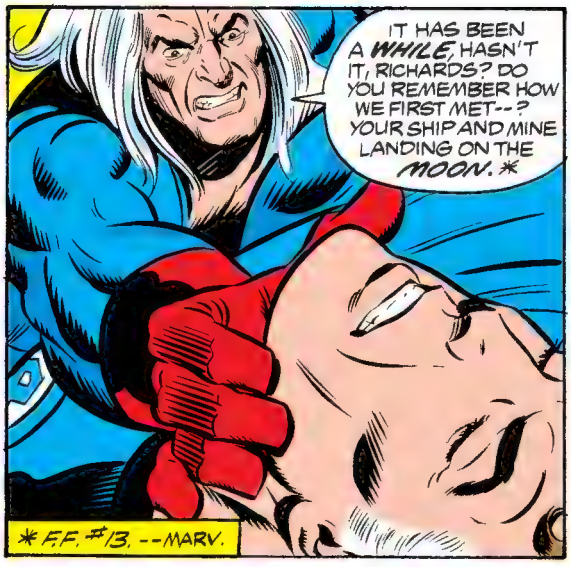

I HOLD THE HUMAN TORCH IN A LIQUID PRISON, ONE WHICH PREVENTS THE USE OF HIS FLAMING POWERS.
RICHARDS' WIFE IS HELD WITHIN A POWER DAMPENER -- ONE THAT PREVENTS THE USE OF HER UNDERRATED TALENTS.
HAVEN'T YOU YET ACCEPTED THE INEVITABLE? DOCTOR DOOM IS NOW UN-STOPPABLE!
AND NOTHING YOU THREE CAN DO WILL CHANGE THAT UNALTERABLE FACT.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, BEN -- DOOM HAS TREATED ME WELL. HE'S PROMISED ME OUR FREEDOM ONCE I'VE COMPLETED THE WORK ON HIS STATUE.


THAT IS CORRECT, GRIMM... FOR THIS WORK WILL COM-MEMORATE MY TRUE GLORY.
AND ONCE HER TASK IS COMPLETED -- YOU WILL BE FREE.
FOR AT THAT VERY SAME MOMENT, YOU ALL SHALL BE POWERLESS -- AND DOCTOR DOOM SHALL CONTROL THE WORLD!


YER NUTTIER 'N A SNICKERS BAR, DOOM. WHAT MAKES YA THINK YER GONNA MAKE IT THIS TIME? THE F.F. ALWAYS PUT THE KIBBOSH ON YA IN THE PAST.
SILENCE, TOAD -- IT IS TIME FOR ALICIA MASTERS TO PLY HER CONSIDERABLE TALENTS AND COMPLETE MY GREATEST MASTERWORK!
ALL THAT REMAINS IS HER JOB -- THE MODELLING OF MY FEATURES AS THEY WERE BEFORE THE ACCIDENT THAT SCARRED THEM!

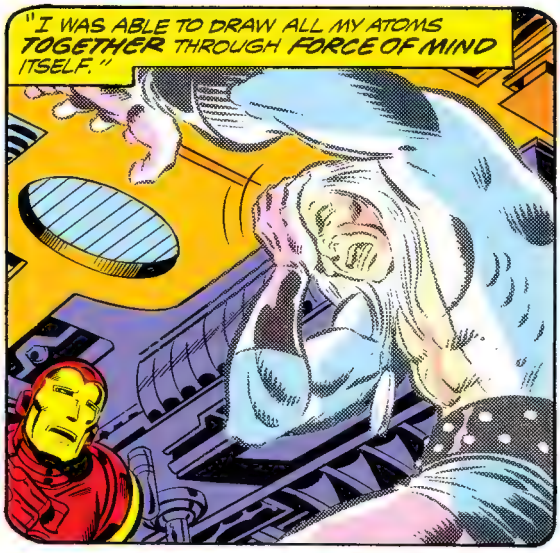

I... I WOULD NEVER HAVE EXPECTED IT LISTENING TO YOU RANT... BUT YOUR FACE INDICATES A SENSITIVE MAN... A STRONG MAN... A MAN WRACKED WITH A LIFE-TIME OF... PAIN.
S-SOMEHOW I SENSE THERE IS A GOOD MAN HERE, BUT YOU'VE BEEN TORN AND TWISTED BY SUSPICION AND HATRED.
THAT IS ENOUGH, WOMAN!

I'LL HEAR NO MORE! I BROUGHT YOU HERE BECAUSE YOU ARE A BLIND SCULPTRESS--ONE WHO COULD DO YOUR WORK WITHOUT EVER SEEING THE RAVAGED FEATURES OF MY FACE.
I'LL NOT HAVE YOU MOCK MY HIDEOUS VISAGE. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME, WOMAN?
DOCTOR DOOM WILL NOT BE MOCKED!
GET YER FILTHY MITTS OFF HER, DOOM, OR, SO HELP ME I'LL PULVERIZE YA WHEN I GET OUTTA HERE.
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? WHY ARE YOU FORCING ALICIA TO SCULPT THAT STATUE?
YOU DEMAND EXPLANATIONS, MRS. RICHARDS? NO ONE ORDERS THE MONARCH OF LATVERIA. NO ONE! ESPECIALLY NOT A FALLEN FOE.
BUT DOOM IS MAGNANIMOUS TO HIS FORMER RIVALS. I WILL TELL YOU.
I HAVE RULED THIS COUNTRY FOR A LONG WHILE. I HAVE TAKEN THESE DIRT-FARMING CLODS AND MADE THEM A PROUD PEOPLE. ALL I HAVE DEMANDED IS BLIND OBEDIENCE.
AFTER ALL, WHAT DOES FREEDOM MEAN TO A RACE OF IGNORANT SAVAGES?
BUT NOW, DUE TO THE LAWS OF LATVERIA, MY TIME AS MONARCH IS OVER.
I MUST ABDICATE MY THRONE--IN THE CEREMONY OF CORONATION TO BE HELD THIS WEEK.
THE STATUE WILL BE DONATED TO THE UNITED NATIONS TO COMMEMORATE MY YEARS AS RULER, AND IT MUST BE COMPLETED...
...BEFORE I HAND THE SCEPTRE OF POWER--
--TO MY SON!
WHAT?
I-I NEVER KNEW!
KISS MY ZITS! THAT CREEP'S A PAPPY!
AND NOW, LET'S HEAD BACK INTO SPACE...
I MUST CONGRATULATE YOU, RICHARDS, YOU SUCCEEDED BEYOND MY WILDEST DREAMS. MY RENEWED POWERS ARE GREATER THAN EVER!
NO LONGER WILL I NEED TO USE MY UNPREDICTABLE SUPER APES!
FROM THIS MOMENT ON--THE RED GHOST IS UNDEFEATABLE!


IT HAS BEEN A WHILE, HASN'T IT, RICHARDS? DO YOU REMEMBER HOW WE FIRST MET--? YOUR SHIP AND MINE LANDING ON THE MOON.*
* F.F. #13. --MARV.

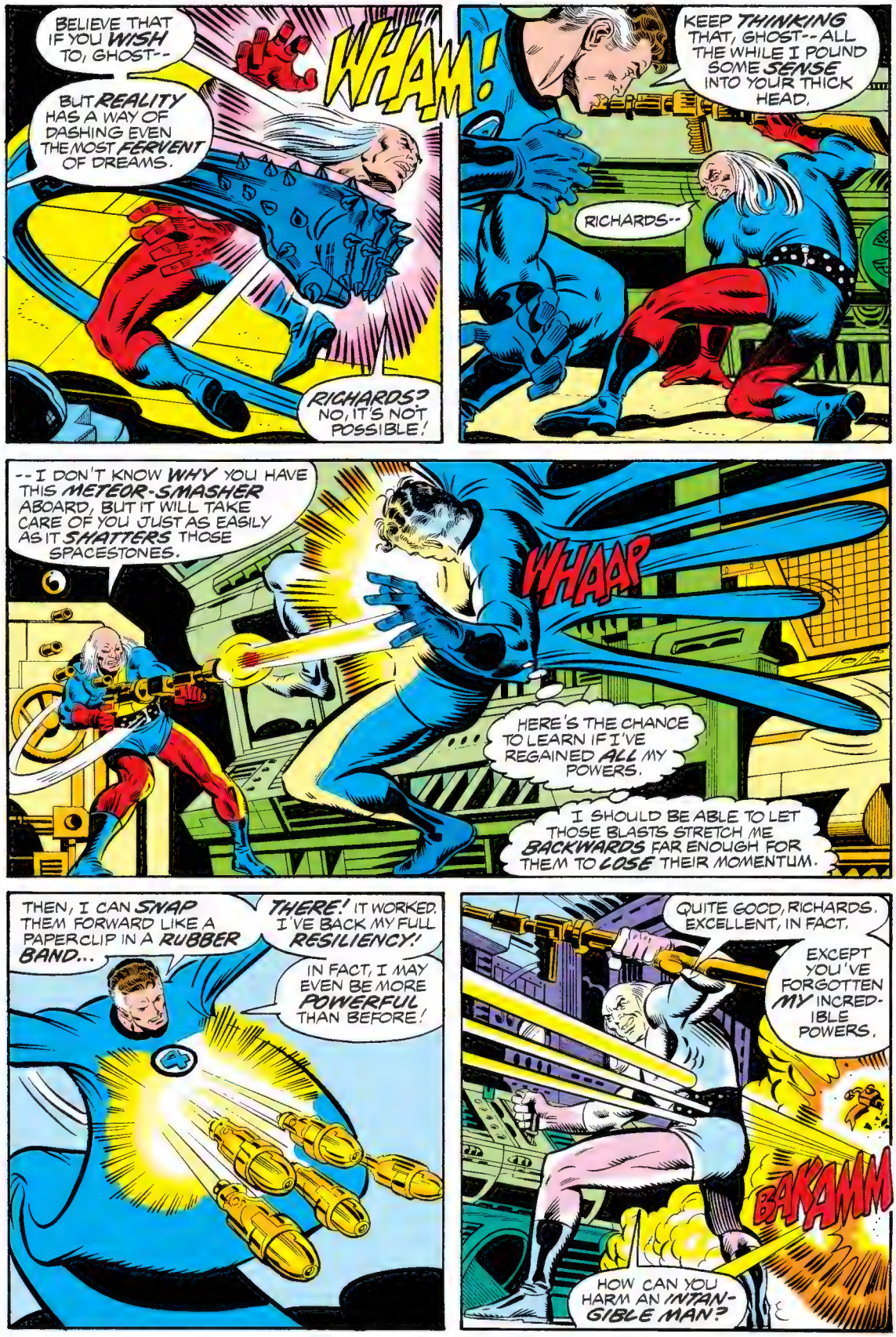
TWICE MORE WE BATTLED--AND BOTH TIMES I WAS DEFEATED.* BUT I NOW LIVE, RICHARDS--AND MY LUST FOR POWER EVER GROWS STRONGER!
* F.F. #29 & ANNUAL #3. --M.W.

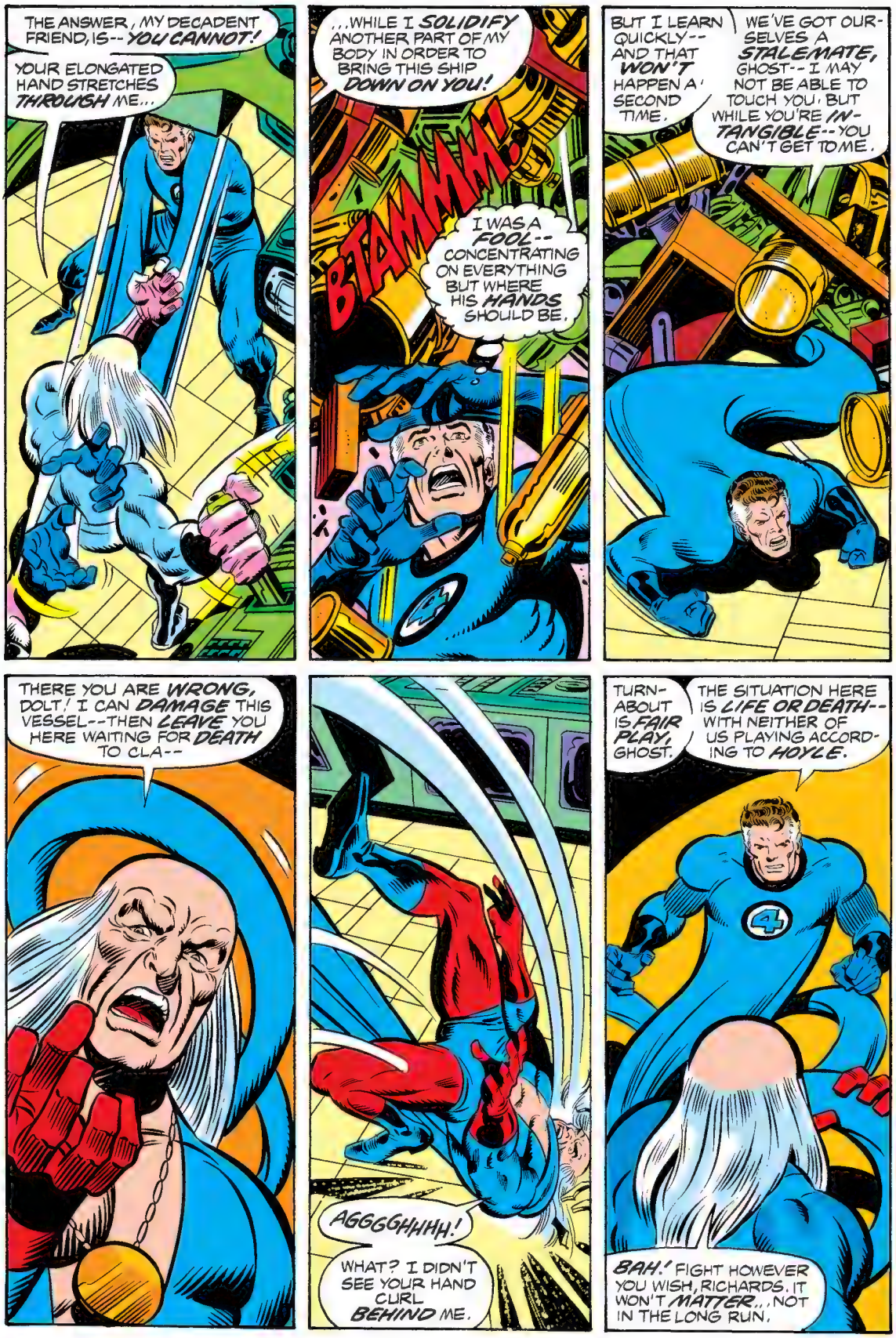
"NOTHING CAN DESTROY ME, RICHARDS--IRON MAN TRIED--AND EVEN HE FAILED.* HE THOUGHT HIS COSMITRONIC CANNON WOULD DISPERSE MY ATOMS ACROSS THE GALAXY--BUT HE WAS WRONG.
* IRON MAN #83. --MARV, ONE MORE TIME.

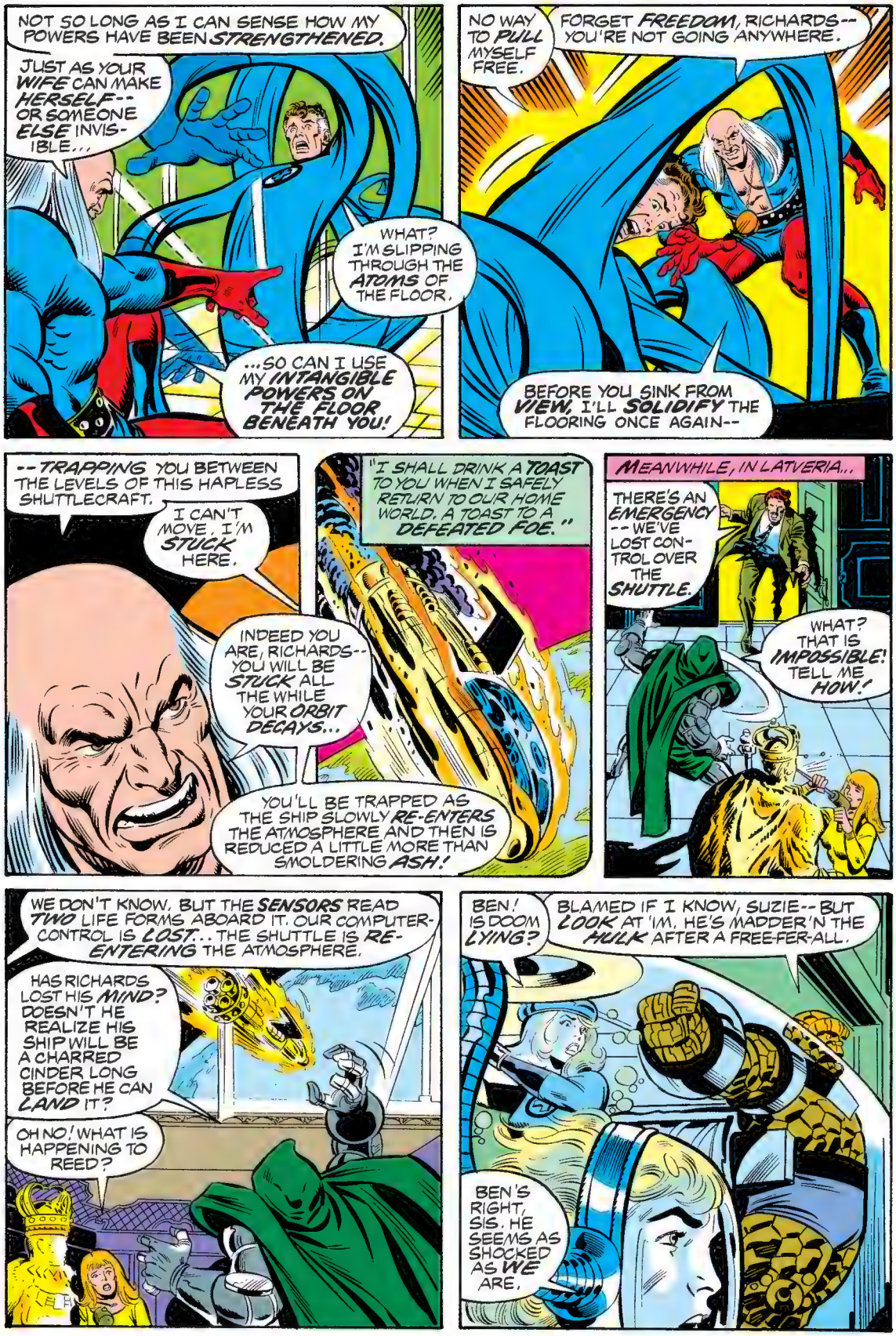

"I WAS ABLE TO DRAW ALL MY ATOMS TOGETHER THROUGH FORCE OF MIND ITSELF."

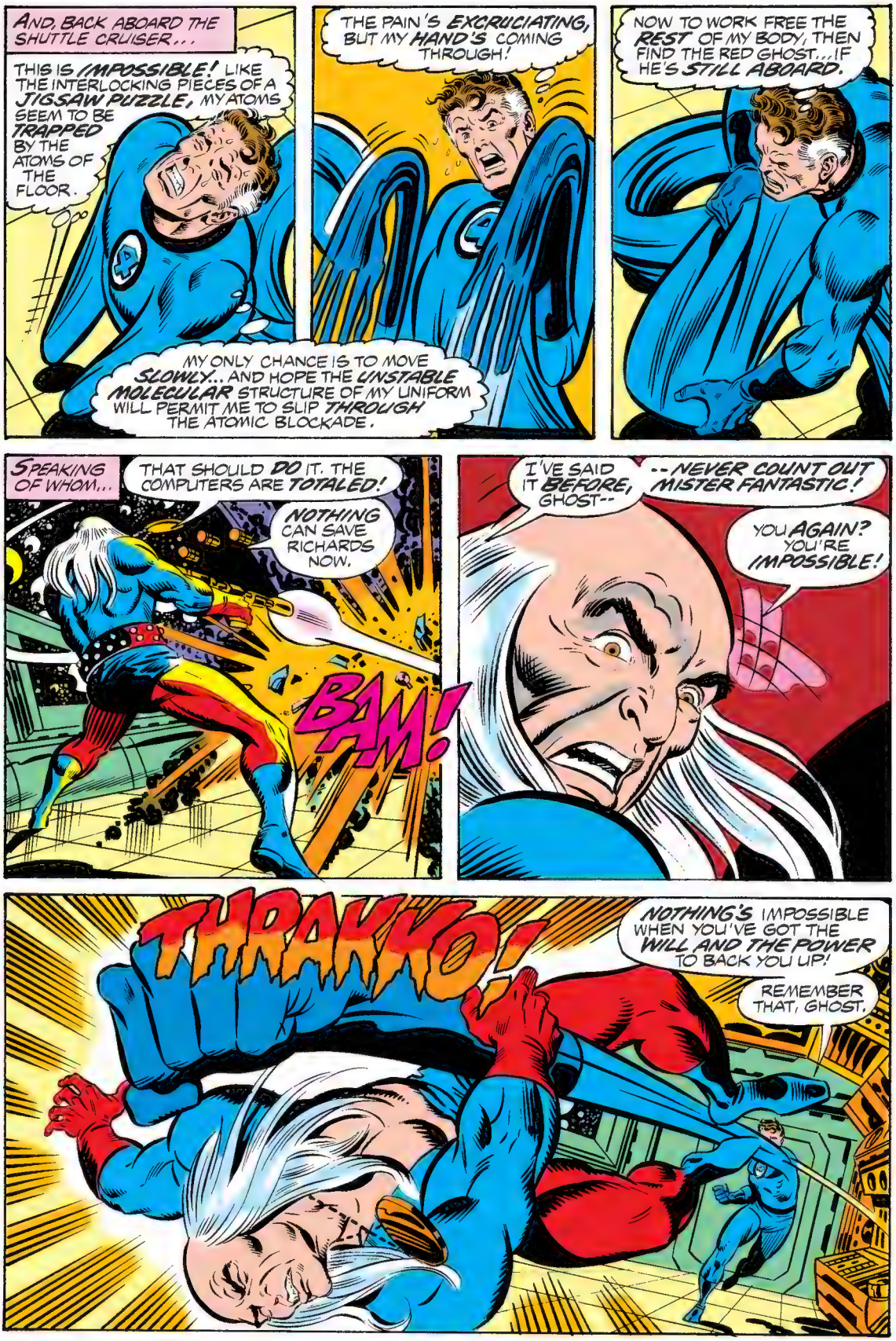
AS AN INTANGIBLE MIST, I CIRCLED THIS GLOBE, PLANNING, PLOTTING. I SOUGHT OUT THE COSMIC RAYS THAT HAD FIRST SPAWNED ME--BUT THIS TIME THEY FAILED TO DO THEIR WORK.
THEN I SAW YOUR SHIP, I REALIZED ITS PURPOSE--AND NOW I'VE REGAINED MY POWERS AND THEY HAVE BEEN HEIGHTENED BEYOND BELIEF.

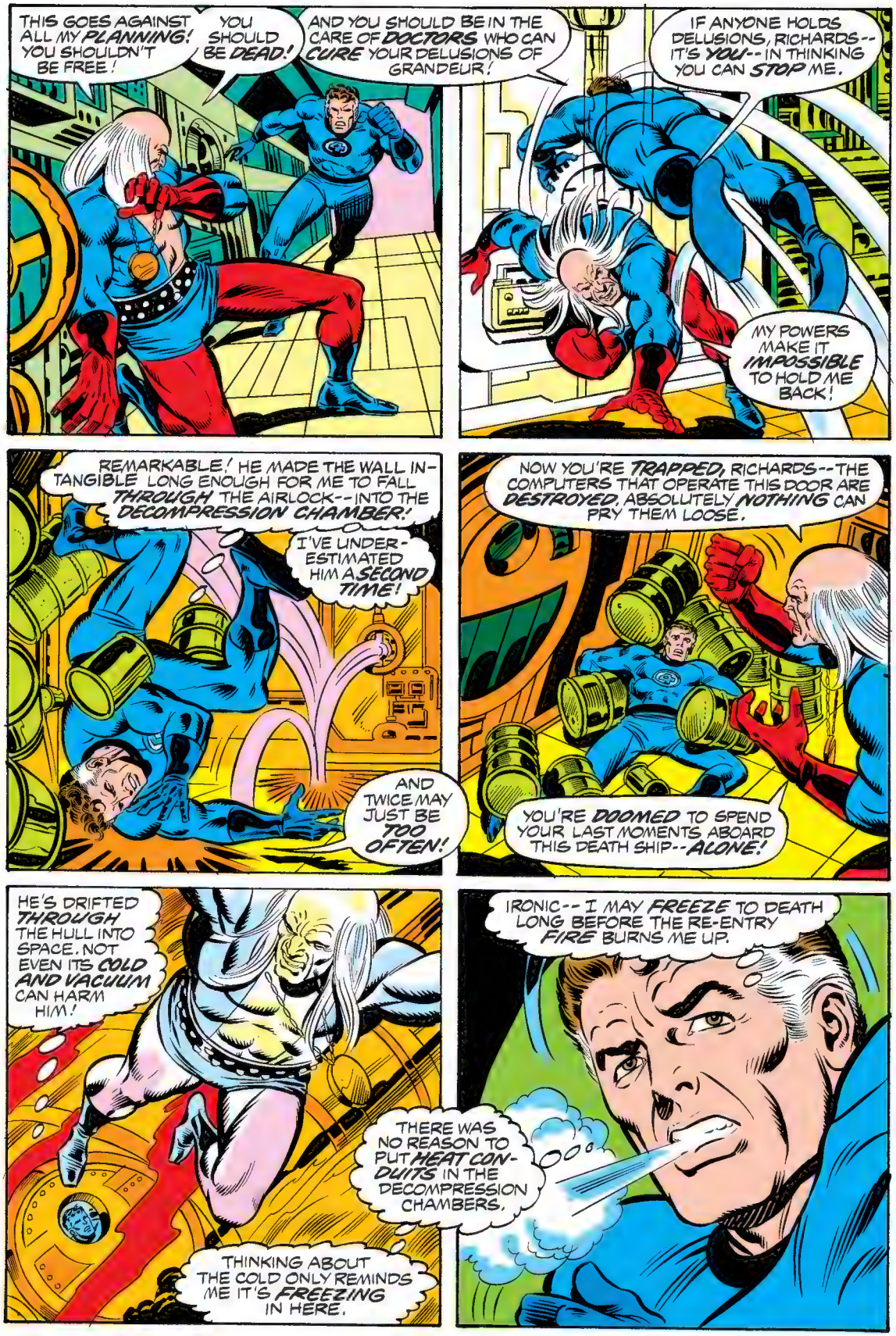
NOW NOTHING WILL EVER STOP THE RED GHOST AGAIN!

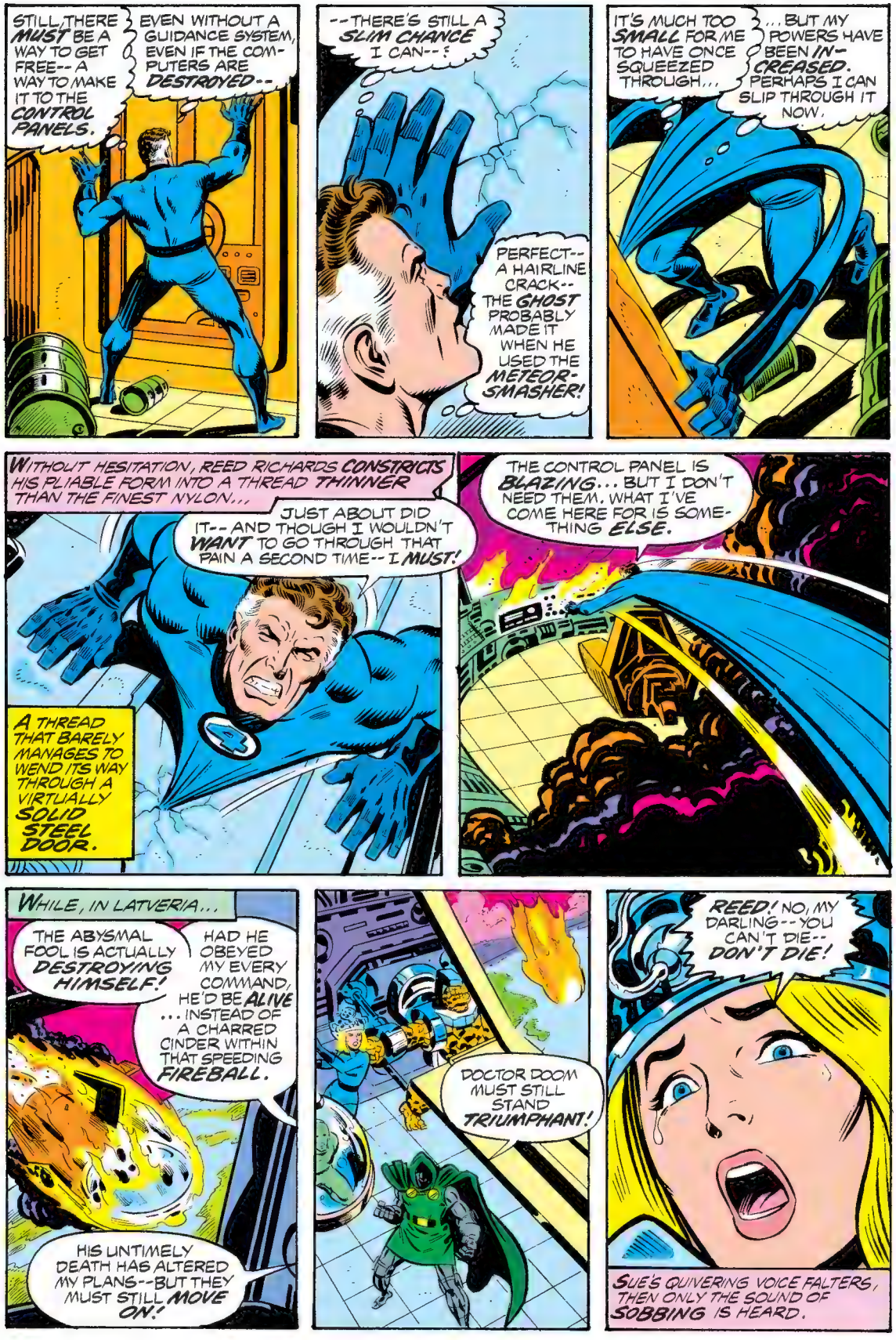

BELIEVE THAT IF YOU WISH TO, GHOST--
BUT REALITY HAS A WAY OF DASHING EVEN THE MOST FERVENT OF DREAMS.
WHAM!
RICHARDS? NO, IT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
KEEP THINKING THAT, GHOST--ALL THE WHILE I POUND SOME SENSE INTO YOUR THICK HEAD.
RICHARDS--
--I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU HAVE THIS METEOR-SMASHER ABOARD, BUT IT WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU JUST AS EASILY AS IT SHATTERS THOSE SPACESTONES.
WHAAP
HERE'S THE CHANCE TO LEARN IF I'VE REGAINED ALL MY POWERS.
I SHOULD BE ABLE TO LET THOSE BLASTS STRETCH ME BACKWARDS FAR ENOUGH FOR THEM TO LOSE THEIR MOMENTUM.
THEN, I CAN SNAP THEM FORWARD LIKE A PAPERCLIP IN A RUBBER BAND...
THERE! IT WORKED. I'VE BACK MY FULL RESILIENCY!
IN FACT, I MAY EVEN BE MORE POWERFUL THAN BEFORE!
QUITE GOOD, RICHARDS. EXCELLENT, IN FACT.
EXCEPT YOU'VE FORGOTTEN MY INCREDIBLE POWERS.
BAKAMM
HOW CAN YOU HARM AN INTANGIBLE MAN?

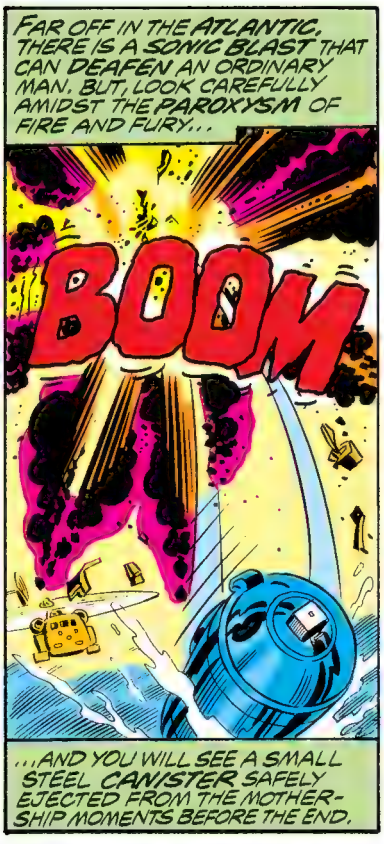

THE ANSWER, MY DECADENT FRIEND, IS-- YOU CANNOT!
YOUR ELONGATED HAND STRETCHES THROUGH ME...
...WHILE I SOLIDIFY ANOTHER PART OF MY BODY IN ORDER TO BRING THIS SHIP DOWN ON YOU!
BTAMMM!
I WAS A FOOL-- CONCENTRATING ON EVERYTHING BUT WHERE HIS HANDS SHOULD BE.
BUT I LEARN QUICKLY-- AND THAT WON'T HAPPEN A SECOND TIME.
WE'VE GOT OURSELVES A STALEMATE, GHOST-- I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO TOUCH YOU, BUT WHILE YOU'RE INTANGIBLE-- YOU CAN'T GET TO ME.
THERE YOU ARE WRONG, DOLT! I CAN DAMAGE THIS VESSEL--THEN LEAVE YOU HERE WAITING FOR DEATH TO CLA--
AGGGGHHHH!
WHAT? I DIDN'T SEE YOUR HAND CURL BEHIND ME.
TURNABOUT IS FAIR PLAY, GHOST.
THE SITUATION HERE IS LIFE OR DEATH-- WITH NEITHER OF US PLAYING ACCORDING TO HOYLE.
BAH! FIGHT HOWEVER YOU WISH, RICHARDS. IT WON'T MATTER... NOT IN THE LONG RUN.

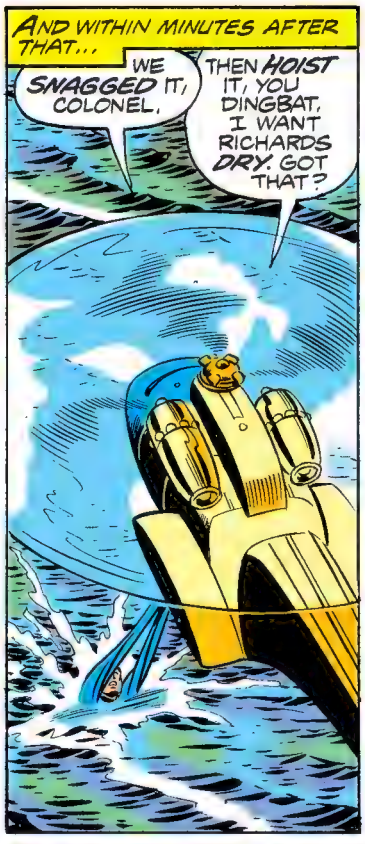

NOT SO LONG AS I CAN SENSE HOW MY POWERS HAVE BEEN STRENGTHENED.
JUST AS YOUR WIFE CAN MAKE HERSELF-- OR SOMEONE ELSE INVISIBLE...
WHAT? I'M SLIPPING THROUGH THE ATOMS OF THE FLOOR.
...SO CAN I USE MY INTANGIBLE POWERS ON THE FLOOR BENEATH YOU!
NO WAY TO PULL MYSELF FREE.
FORGET FREEDOM, RICHARDS-- YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
BEFORE YOU SINK FROM VIEW, I'LL SOLIDIFY THE FLOORING ONCE AGAIN--
--TRAPPING YOU BETWEEN THE LEVELS OF THIS HAPLESS SHUTTLECRAFT.
I CAN'T MOVE. I'M STUCK HERE.
INDEED YOU ARE, RICHARDS-- YOU WILL BE STUCK ALL THE WHILE YOUR ORBIT DECAYS...
"I SHALL DRINK A TOAST TO YOU WHEN I SAFELY RETURN TO OUR HOME WORLD. A TOAST TO A DEFEATED FOE."
YOU'LL BE TRAPPED AS THE SHIP SLOWLY RE-ENTERS THE ATMOSPHERE AND THEN IS REDUCED A LITTLE MORE THAN SMOLDERING ASH!
MEANWHILE, IN LATVERIA...
THERE'S AN EMERGENCY -- WE'VE LOST CONTROL OVER THE SHUTTLE.
WHAT? THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE! TELL ME HOW!
WE DON'T KNOW, BUT THE SENSORS READ TWO LIFE FORMS ABOARD IT. OUR COMPUTER-CONTROL IS LOST... THE SHUTTLE IS RE-ENTERING THE ATMOSPHERE.
HAS RICHARDS LOST HIS MIND? DOESN'T HE REALIZE HIS SHIP WILL BE A CHARRED CINDER LONG BEFORE HE CAN LAND IT?
OH NO! WHAT IS HAPPENING TO REED?
BEN! IS DOOM LYING?
BLAMED IF I KNOW, SUZIE-- BUT LOOK AT 'IM. HE'S MADDER'N THE HULK AFTER A FREE-FER-ALL.
BEN'S RIGHT, SIS. HE SEEMS AS SHOCKED AS WE ARE.

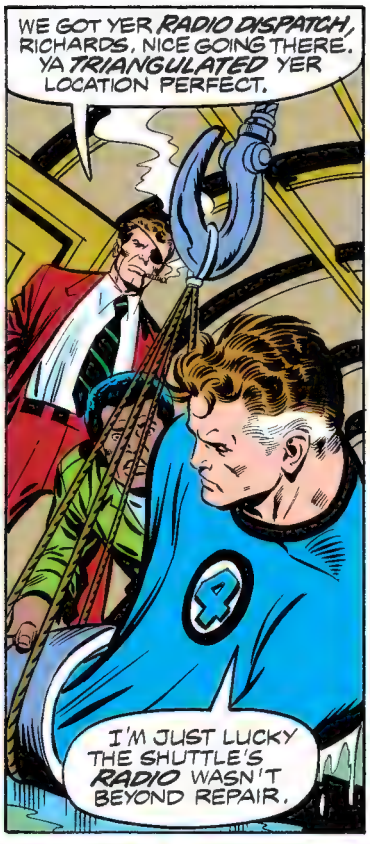

AND, BACK ABOARD THE SHUTTLE CRUISER...
THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE! LIKE THE INTERLOCKING PIECES OF A JIGSAW PUZZLE, MY ATOMS SEEM TO BE TRAPPED BY THE ATOMS OF THE FLOOR.
THE PAIN'S EXCRUCIATING, BUT MY HAND'S COMING THROUGH!
MY ONLY CHANCE IS TO MOVE SLOWLY.. AND HOPE THE UNSTABLE MOLECULAR STRUCTURE OF MY UNIFORM WILL PERMIT ME TO SLIP THROUGH THE ATOMIC BLOCKADE.
NOW TO WORK FREE THE REST OF MY BODY, THEN FIND THE RED GHOST...IF HE'S STILL ABOARD.
SPEAKING OF WHOM...
THAT SHOULD DO IT. THE COMPUTERS ARE TOTALED!
NOTHING CAN SAVE RICHARDS NOW.
BAM!
I'VE SAID IT BEFORE, GHOST--
--NEVER COUNT OUT MISTER FANTASTIC!
YOU AGAIN? YOU'RE IMPOSSIBLE!
THRAKKO!
NOTHING'S IMPOSSIBLE WHEN YOU'VE GOT THE WILL AND THE POWER TO BACK YOU UP!
REMEMBER THAT, GHOST.


THIS GOES AGAINST ALL MY PLANNING! YOU SHOULDN'T BE FREE!
YOU SHOULD BE DEAD!
AND YOU SHOULD BE IN THE CARE OF DOCTORS WHO CAN CURE YOUR DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR!
IF ANYONE HOLDS DELUSIONS, RICHARDS--IT'S YOU--IN THINKING YOU CAN STOP ME.
MY POWERS MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO HOLD ME BACK!
REMARKABLE! HE MADE THE WALL INTANGIBLE LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO FALL THROUGH THE AIRLOCK--INTO THE DECOMPRESSION CHAMBER!
I'VE UNDERESTIMATED HIM A SECOND TIME!
AND TWICE MAY JUST BE TOO OFTEN!
NOW YOU'RE TRAPPED, RICHARDS--THE COMPUTERS THAT OPERATE THIS DOOR ARE DESTROYED, ABSOLUTELY NOTHING CAN PRY THEM LOOSE.
YOU'RE DOOMED TO SPEND YOUR LAST MOMENTS ABOARD THIS DEATH SHIP--ALONE!
HE'S DRIFTED THROUGH THE HULL INTO SPACE. NOT EVEN ITS COLD AND VACUUM CAN HARM HIM!
THERE WAS NO REASON TO PUT HEAT CONDUITS IN THE DECOMPRESSION CHAMBERS.
THINKING ABOUT THE COLD ONLY REMINDS ME IT'S FREEZING IN HERE.
IRONIC--I MAY FREEZE TO DEATH LONG BEFORE THE RE-ENTRY FIRE BURNS ME UP.

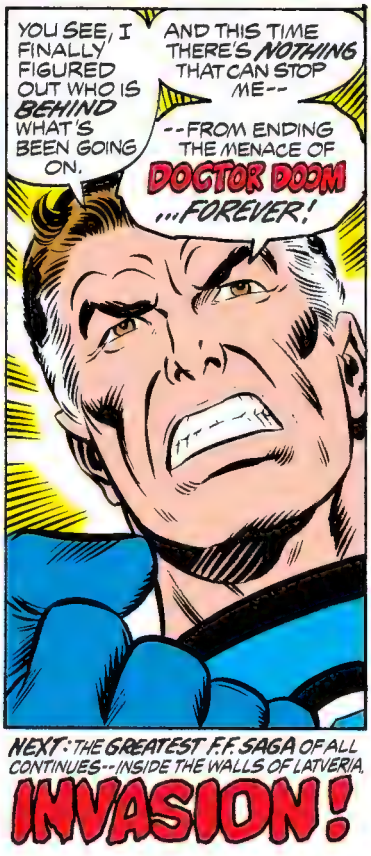

STILL, THERE MUST BE A WAY TO GET FREE-- A WAY TO MAKE IT TO THE CONTROL PANELS.
EVEN WITHOUT A GUIDANCE SYSTEM, EVEN IF THE COMPUTERS ARE DESTROYED--
--THERE'S STILL A SLIM CHANCE I CAN--!
PERFECT-- A HAIRLINE CRACK-- THE GHOST PROBABLY MADE IT WHEN HE USED THE METEOR-SMASHER!
IT'S MUCH TOO SMALL FOR ME TO HAVE ONCE SQUEEZED THROUGH...
...BUT MY POWERS HAVE BEEN INCREASED. PERHAPS I CAN SLIP THROUGH IT NOW.
WITHOUT HESITATION, REED RICHARDS CONSTRICTS HIS PLIABLE FORM INTO A THREAD THINNER THAN THE FINEST NYLON...
JUST ABOUT DID IT-- AND THOUGH I WOULDN'T WANT TO GO THROUGH THAT PAIN A SECOND TIME-- I MUST!
A THREAD THAT BARELY MANAGES TO WEND ITS WAY THROUGH A VIRTUALLY SOLID STEEL DOOR.
THE CONTROL PANEL IS BLAZING... BUT I DON'T NEED THEM. WHAT I'VE COME HERE FOR IS SOMETHING ELSE.
WHILE, IN LATVERIA...
THE ABYSMAL FOOL IS ACTUALLY DESTROYING HIMSELF!
HAD HE OBEYED MY EVERY COMMAND, HE'D BE ALIVE ... INSTEAD OF A CHARRED CINDER WITHIN THAT SPEEDING FIREBALL.
HIS UNTIMELY DEATH HAS ALTERED MY PLANS--BUT THEY MUST STILL MOVE ON!
DOCTOR DOOM MUST STILL STAND TRIUMPHANT!
REED! NO, MY DARLING-- YOU CAN'T DIE-- DON'T DIE!
SUE'S QUIVERING VOICE FALTERS, THEN ONLY THE SOUND OF SOBBING IS HEARD.


FAR OFF IN THE ATLANTIC, THERE IS A SONIC BLAST THAT CAN DEAFEN AN ORDINARY MAN. BUT, LOOK CAREFULLY AMIDST THE PAROXYSM OF FIRE AND FURY...
BOOM
...AND YOU WILL SEE A SMALL STEEL CANISTER SAFELY EJECTED FROM THE MOTHER-SHIP MOMENTS BEFORE THE END.




WE GOT YER RADIO DISPATCH, RICHARDS. NICE GOING THERE. YA TRIANGULATED YER LOCATION PERFECT.
I'M JUST LUCKY THE SHUTTLE'S RADIO WASN'T BEYOND REPAIR.

AWRIGHT, YA MIND TELLIN' ME WHAT IN THE NAME 'A NASA IS GOIN' ON? IF NICK FURY SAVES A GUY, HE WANTS TA KNOW WHAT HE'S SAVIN' HIM FROM.
NICK, I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR THE QUICK ACTION.
BUT THIS IS MY FIGHT. I DON'T WANT ANYONE WITH ME.
YOU NEED ANYTHIN', PAL, JUST NAME IT.


YOU SEE, I FINALLY FIGURED OUT WHO IS BEHIND WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON.
AND THIS TIME THERE'S NOTHING THAT CAN STOP ME--
--FROM ENDING THE MENACE OF DOCTOR DOOM ...FOREVER!

NEXT: THE GREATEST F.F. SAGA OF ALL CONTINUES--INSIDE THE WALLS OF LATVERIA.

INVASION!

FANTASTIC FOUR
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FANTASTIC FOUR
HURRY! WE MUST INVADE DR. DOOM'S ROYAL PALACE--ONE WAY OR ANOTHER!
THE ONLY WAY YOU WILL ENTER MY INNER SANCTUM, IS DEAD!
AN F.F. SAGA UNLIKE ANY YOU HAVE EVER READ!
INVASION!!

A brilliant scientist— his best friend— the woman he loves— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human! MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! Now they are the FANTASTIC FOUR— and the world will never be the same again!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

MARV WOLFMAN WRITER / EDITOR / KEITH POLLARD & JOE SINNOTT ARTISTS EXTRAORDINAIRE / RICK PARKER LETTERER / J. COHEN COLORIST

PART 3 OF THE GREATEST F.F. EPIC OF ALL!
INVASION!
REED RICHARDS WAS MAD, NOW HE IS ANXIOUS AND SOMEWHAT FEARFUL. THE REASON? HE HAS REASONED OUT THE IDENTITY OF HIS UNKNOWN BENEFACTOR...
...AND THE BRILLIANT SCIENTIST FULLY UNDERSTANDS THAT HE OWES THE RETURN OF HIS FANTASTIC POWERS--
--TO THE MAN WHO IS HIS GREATEST ENEMY!
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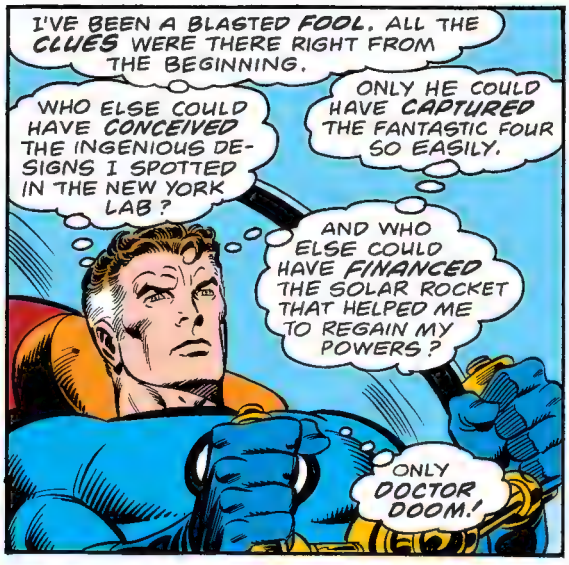
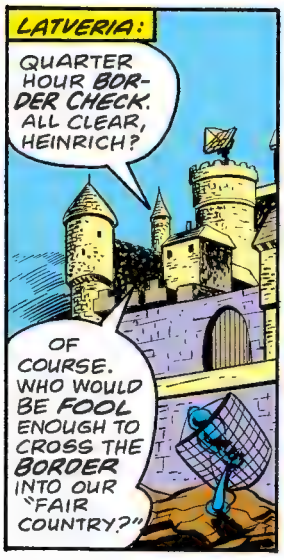
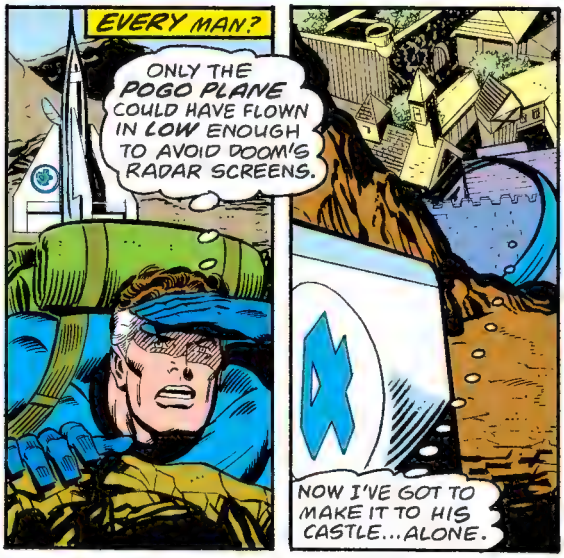

I'VE BEEN A BLASTED FOOL. ALL THE CLUES WERE THERE RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING.
WHO ELSE COULD HAVE CONCEIVED THE INGENIOUS DESIGNS I SPOTTED IN THE NEW YORK LAB?
ONLY HE COULD HAVE CAPTURED THE FANTASTIC FOUR SO EASILY.
AND WHO ELSE COULD HAVE FINANCED THE SOLAR ROCKET THAT HELPED ME TO REGAIN MY POWERS?
ONLY DOCTOR DOOM!

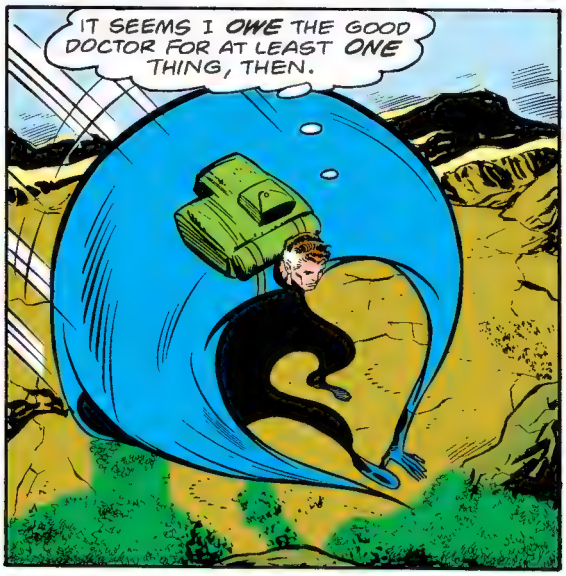
AND I--I PLAYED OUT HIS HAND LIKE A WITLESS FOOL.
AND THIS TIME, ONLY ONE OF US WILL SURVIVE OUR MEETING.
BUT NO MORE, DOOM. I'M COMING FOR YOU!
THAT, MISTER FANTASTIC--SWEARS!


LATVERIA:
QUARTER HOUR BORDER CHECK. ALL CLEAR, HEINRICH?
OF COURSE. WHO WOULD BE FOOL ENOUGH TO CROSS THE BORDER INTO OUR "FAIR COUNTRY?"

EVERY MAN LIVING KNOWS THAT TO ENTER LATVERIA MEANS NEVER LEAVING IT--ALIVE!

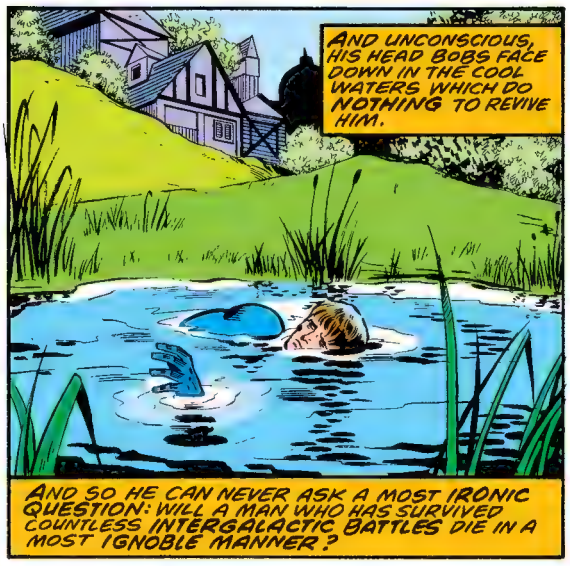

EVERY MAN?
ONLY THE POGO PLANE COULD HAVE FLOWN IN LOW ENOUGH TO AVOID DOOM'S RADAR SCREENS.
NOW I'VE GOT TO MAKE IT TO HIS CASTLE...ALONE.

HMMM. MY POWERS SEEM TO BE GREATER THAN EVER... I CAN STRETCH FURTHER BEFORE MY STRENGTH DIMINISHES.

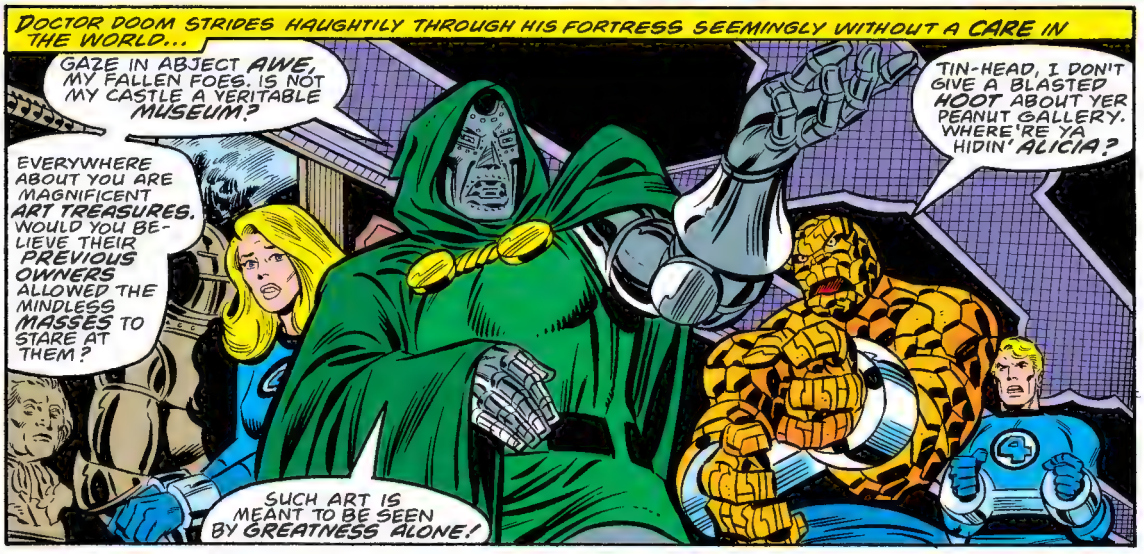

IT SEEMS I OWE THE GOOD DOCTOR FOR AT LEAST ONE THING, THEN.

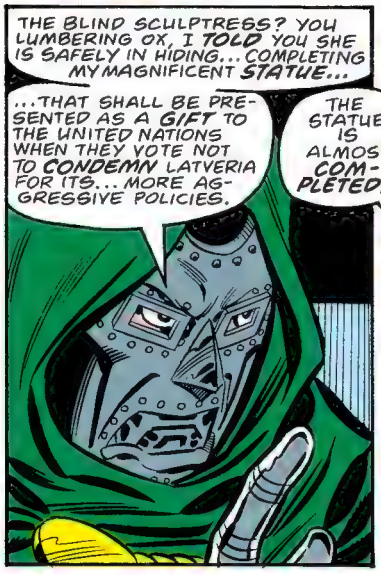
WITHOUT HIS VAST FINANCIAL AID, I COULD NEVER HAVE BECOME MR. FANTASTIC AGAIN.
WELL, I INTEND TO PAY HIM BACK, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE HE'LL APPRECIATE MY METHOD OF PAYMENT.
FWUMP!
HMMM. DOOM'S ROBOTIC GUARDS STILL PATROL THE BORDERS--
HERE'S A CHANCE TO SEE IF THE JAMMER I BROUGHT WITH ME WORKS!
OH NO! DOOM MUST HAVE AN OVERRIDE MECHANISM BUILT INTO THEM! THEY'RE IGNORING ALL MY FREQUENCY COMMANDS!
ZAKKK!
G-31
A-12
TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, THEY MUST BE PROGRAMMED TO ATTACK WHOEVER ATTEMPTS TO ALTER THEIR CONTROLS!
ZAKK
THESE ROBOTS ARE EQUIPPED WITH IONIC LASERS! UNLESS DOOM EXPECTED PROBLEMS, WHY WOULD HE GO TO THE EXPENSE OF CREATING THEM?
ZKAK
AN ORDINARY LASER SURELY WOULD SUFFICE... HE MUST BE PLANNING SOMETHING IMPORTANT!
ZAKK

IMPORTANT ENOUGH FOR HIM TO HAVE KIDNAPPED MY WIFE AND FRIENDS, TO AID ME IN REGAINING MY LOST POWERS...
SPOK!
...AND TO IMPORT THE WORLD'S GREATEST MINDS TO CREATE MACHINERY FOR A STILL UNKNOWN DEVICE.
WHAT IS DOOM UP TO?
AND WHY DOES HIS LIEUTENANT SEEM SO BLASTED FAMILIAR?
THERE I GO AGAIN...THINKING WHEN I SHOULD BE FIGHTING!
I'VE GOT TO DEACTIVATE THIS ROBOT, BUT WHY IS THIS BACKPLATE--?
TOO LATE! I'VE ALREADY TOUCHED IT!
IT'S A CONDUCTIVE PLATE DESIGNED TO PREVENT TAMPERING. BY GRABBING IT, I'VE COMPLETED THE CIRCUIT!
FOK!
UNGGHHH!
MIND-NUMBING PAIN RIPPLES THROUGH REED'S SUDDENLY PARALYZED BODY...
SLOOSH!
HELPLESS, HE LIMPLY FALLS BACKWARDS...


AND UNCONSCIOUS, HIS HEAD BOBS FACE DOWN IN THE COOL WATERS WHICH DO NOTHING TO REVIVE HIM.
AND SO HE CAN NEVER ASK A MOST IRONIC QUESTION: WILL A MAN WHO HAS SURVIVED COUNTLESS INTERGALACTIC BATTLES DIE IN A MOST IGNOBLE MANNER?

HE GOES DOWN TWICE BEFORE A MASSIVE HAND REACHES OUT AND PULLS THE FORMER LEADER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR TO APPARENT... SAFETY.
HE IS ALIVE! HURRY! WE MUST BRING HIM TO OUR LEADER!


DOCTOR DOOM STRIDES HAUGHTILY THROUGH HIS FORTRESS SEEMINGLY WITHOUT A CARE IN THE WORLD...
GAZE IN ABJECT AWE, MY FALLEN FOES. IS NOT MY CASTLE A VERITABLE MUSEUM?
EVERYWHERE ABOUT YOU ARE MAGNIFICENT ART TREASURES. WOULD YOU BELIEVE THEIR PREVIOUS OWNERS ALLOWED THE MINDLESS MASSES TO STARE AT THEM?
SUCH ART IS MEANT TO BE SEEN BY GREATNESS ALONE!
TIN-HEAD, I DON'T GIVE A BLASTED HOOT ABOUT YER PEANUT GALLERY. WHERE'RE YA HIDIN' ALICIA?

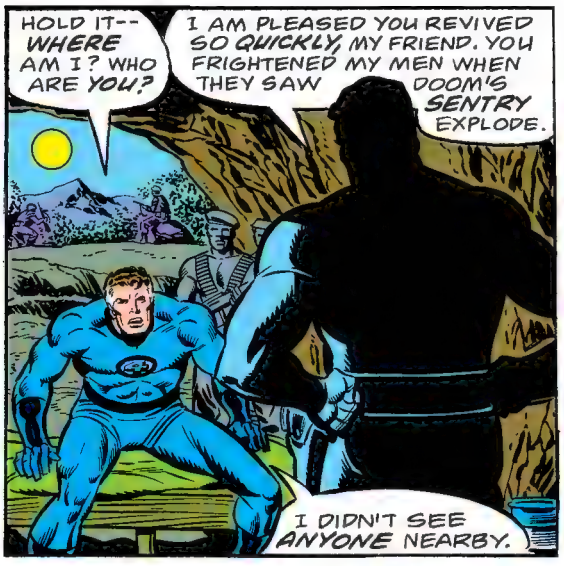

THE BLIND SCULPTRESS? YOU LUMBERING OX, I TOLD YOU SHE IS SAFELY IN HIDING... COMPLETING MY MAGNIFICENT STATUE...
...THAT SHALL BE PRESENTED AS A GIFT TO THE UNITED NATIONS WHEN THEY VOTE NOT TO CONDEMN LATVERIA FOR ITS... MORE AGGRESSIVE POLICIES.
THE STATUE IS ALMOST COMPLETED!

GOOD, MY SON--VERY GOOD!
IT MUST BE DONE WHEN I HAND OVER THE MONARCHY TO YOU-- MY HEIR APPARENT.
ON THAT DAY LATVERIA WILL HAVE A NEW RULER... AND THE UNITED NATIONS SHALL HAVE A NEW GIFT.

WHAT AN HISTORIC DAY THAT SHALL BE.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR SO-CALLED SON, DOOM. I WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED TO REED
WHY HAVEN'T YOU SENT OUT YOUR MEN TO SEARCH FOR HIM?
REED HAS SURVIVED WORSE DANGERS IN HIS DAY.

WOMAN, IT IS FRUITLESS TO LOOK FOR A DEAD MAN WHEN I AM BUSY WITH THE UPCOMING FESTIVITIES.
LOOK AT THOSE MINDLESS CRETINS, PRANCING LIKE HEADLESS CHICKENS. IT DOES A MONARCH'S HEART PROUD TO SEE HIS SUBJECTS SO WILLING TO DEBASE THEMSELVES AT MY COMMAND.
GUARDS! THEY ARE NOT SMILING THE WAY I DEMANDED. PUNISH THEM AS AN EXAMPLE TO ALL OF LATVERIA'S CITIZENS.
I INSIST MY SUBJECTS BE HAPPY... ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
CAN-HEAD, I'VE BEEN STANDIN' HERE PRAYIN' THIS WUZ SOME KINDA NIGHTMARE!
... BUT IF STRETCHO'S REALLY DEAD, THEN NOTHIN'S GONNA STOP ME FROM CREAMIN' YA!
ZNAKK
LUDICROUS PILE OF ROCKS! YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN MANHANDLE THE LORD OF LATVERIA LIKE A MERE COMMONER?
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE WRIST SHACKLES PLACED ON YOU?
EACH STEP FORWARD INCREASES THEIR DEADLY VOLTAGE.
CONTINUE YOUR MINDLESS RAMPAGE AND YOU SHALL BE AS DEAD AS YOUR FORMER LEADER!
THE PAIN'S KILLIN' ME... BUT I AIN'T GONNA LET IT STOP ME! I'M GONNA WRING YER BLASTED TIN NECK, DOOM!
ZAKK!

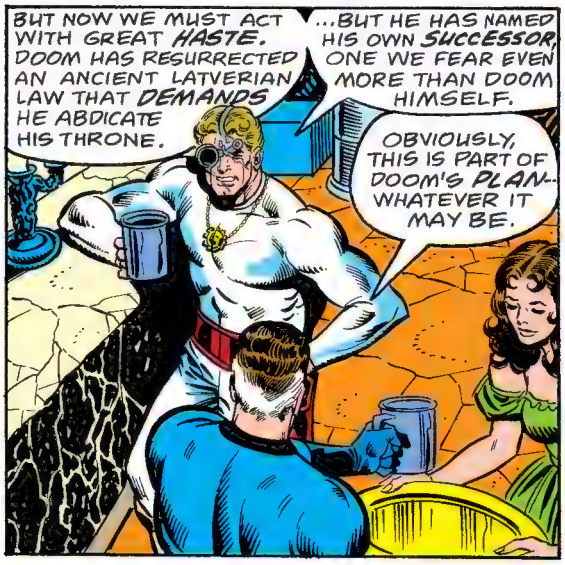
YA ALWAYS THOUGHT YERSELF SO HIGH 'N' MIGHTY, ALWAYS PUTTIN' ME DOWN-- ALWAYS THINKIN' THAT I'M AS STUPID AS I LOOK...
I DON'T CARE WHAT I LOOK LIKE, DOOM -- BUT BEN GRIMM AIN'T NOBODY'S FOOL... NOBODY'S!
FWUMP
UNGGHHH!
GOOD LORD, THE BUFFOON DOESN'T KNOW WHEN HE'S BEEN DEFEATED!
AT LAST, HIS THICK-HIDED BRAIN TOLD HIM TO FALL.
IF YOU'VE DONE ANYTHING PERMANENT TO HIM, DOOM...
I BELIEVE THE WOMAN IS THREATENING YOU.
GRINS, IF SUE DOESN'T MAKE HERSELF CLEAR, LISTEN TO ME!
WE'RE GONNA BUST OUTTA HERE AND RAM THAT IRON MASK RIGHT DOWN YOUR SLIMY THROAT!
STORM, YOUR CHILDISH PRATTLINGS MEAN NOTHING TO DOCTOR DOOM.
SON, SECURE THESE FOOLS AND BRING THE SCULPTRESS TO ME.
I FEEL IN THE MOOD TO POSE.
LET'S SEE HOW YA'D POSE WITH ONE'A MY FISTS STUFFIN' YER NOSE.
THE STAGE IS ALMOST SET, BUT WE HAVE ONE PLAYER YOU'VE YET TO MEET... SO LET'S VISIT A CERTAIN UNDERGROUND GROTTO...
YES, THAT IS REED RICHARDS. HOW IS HE, KORO?
HE IS ALREADY REVIVING, ZORBA.
PERHAPS HE WILL BE THE ONE TO--
OHHHH...I THOUGHT I--
WE SHALL SEE, KORO. NOW GO!

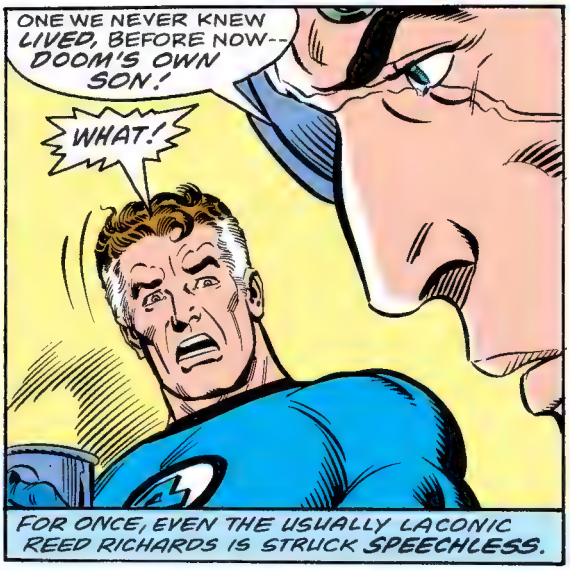

HOLD IT-- WHERE AM I? WHO ARE YOU?
I AM PLEASED YOU REVIVED SO QUICKLY, MY FRIEND. YOU FRIGHTENED MY MEN WHEN THEY SAW DOOM'S SENTRY EXPLODE.
I DIDN'T SEE ANYONE NEARBY.

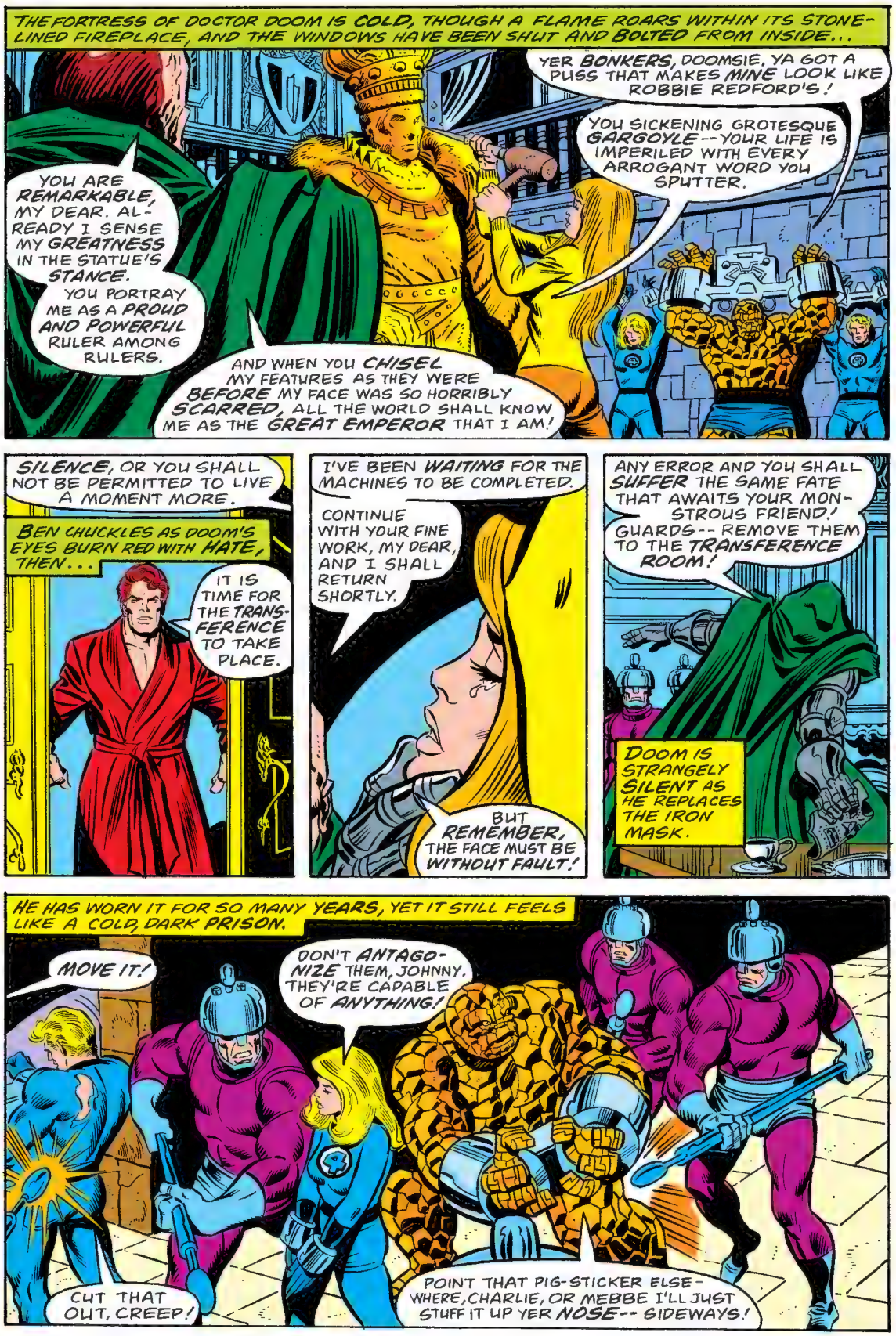
THE UNDER-GROUND HAS EYES EVERY-WHERE IN LATVERIA...
IF YOU SEE A SHIFTING SHADOW IN THE BUSHES... THAT IS US.

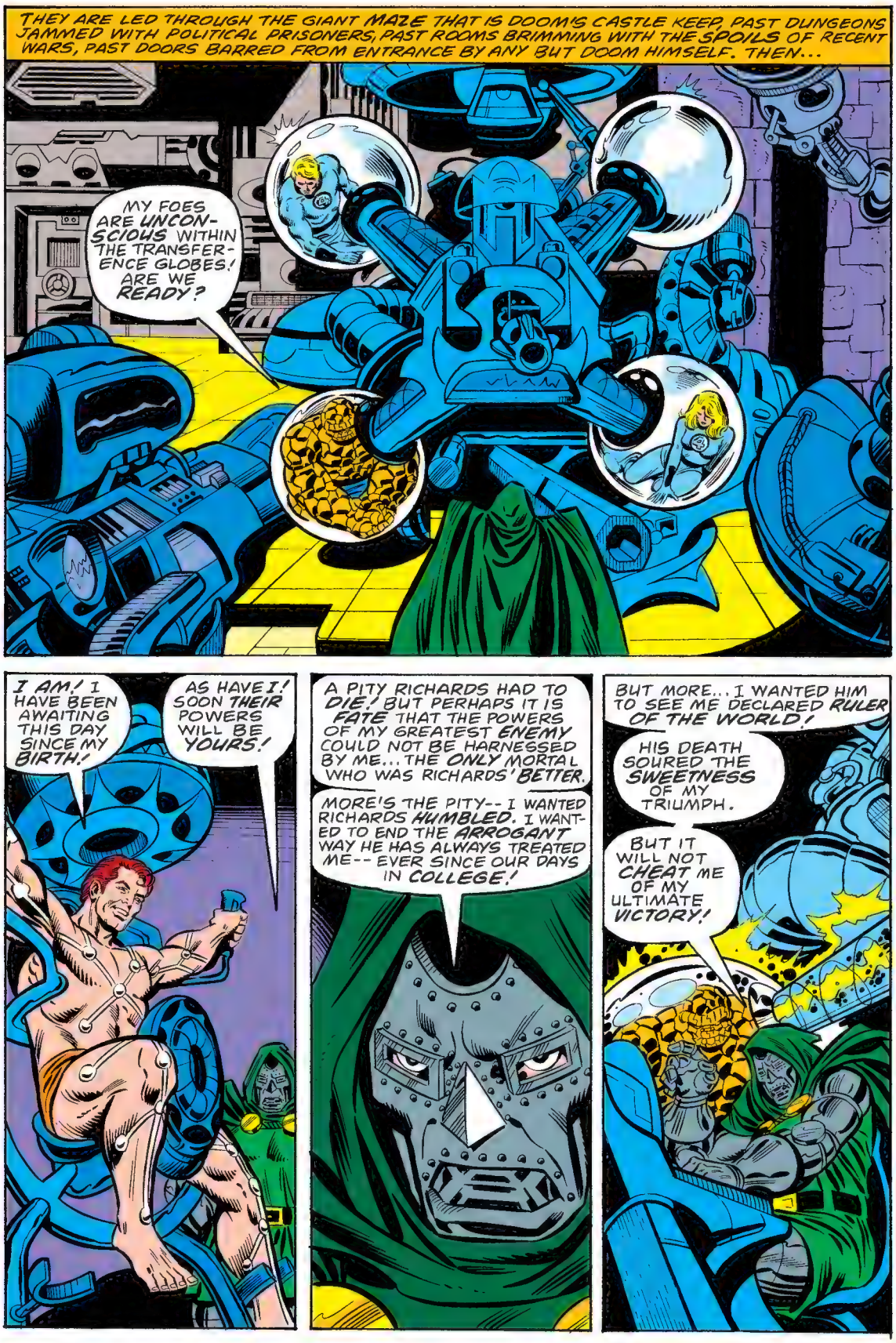
HOW ELSE DO YOU THINK WE HAVE AVOIDED DOOM'S SEN-TRIES FOR SO MANY YEARS?
BUT FIRST, AN INTRODUCTION. I AM ZORBA, LEADER OF THE LATVERIAN FREEDOM FIGHTERS.
THAT'S A NEW ONE ON ME. I DIDN'T THINK THE UNDERGROUND STILL EXISTED HERE.

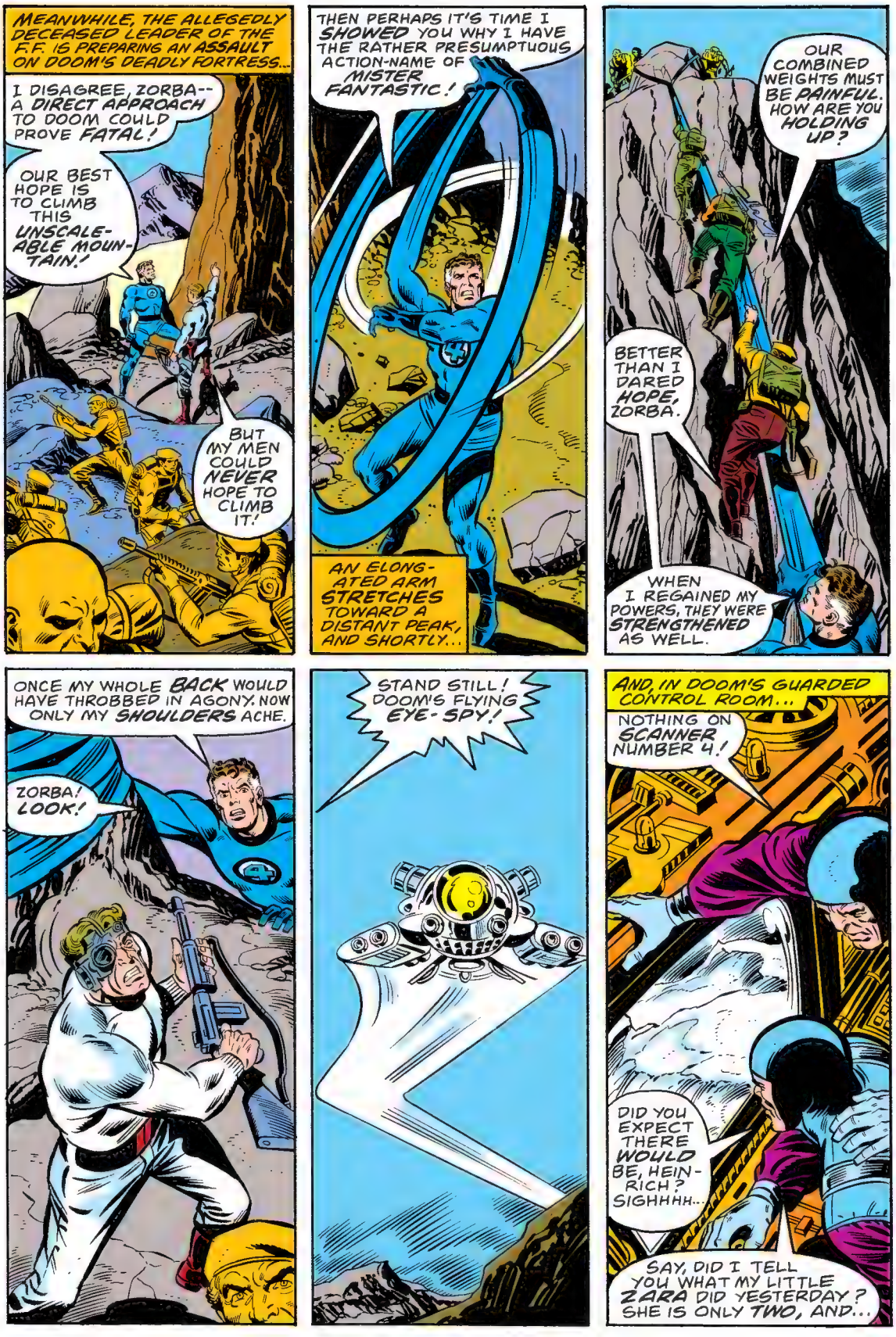
THERE ARE FEW WE CAN TRUST, MY FRIEND. IF DOOM KNEW WE LIVED, HE WOULD ERADICATE US INSTANTLY.
SNAK!
RIGHT NOW, WE NUMBER LESS THAN FIFTY... AND WE SEEK TO REPLACE DOOM'S REIGN WITH THE RIGHTFUL HEIR TO OUR LATE KING RUDOLFO.

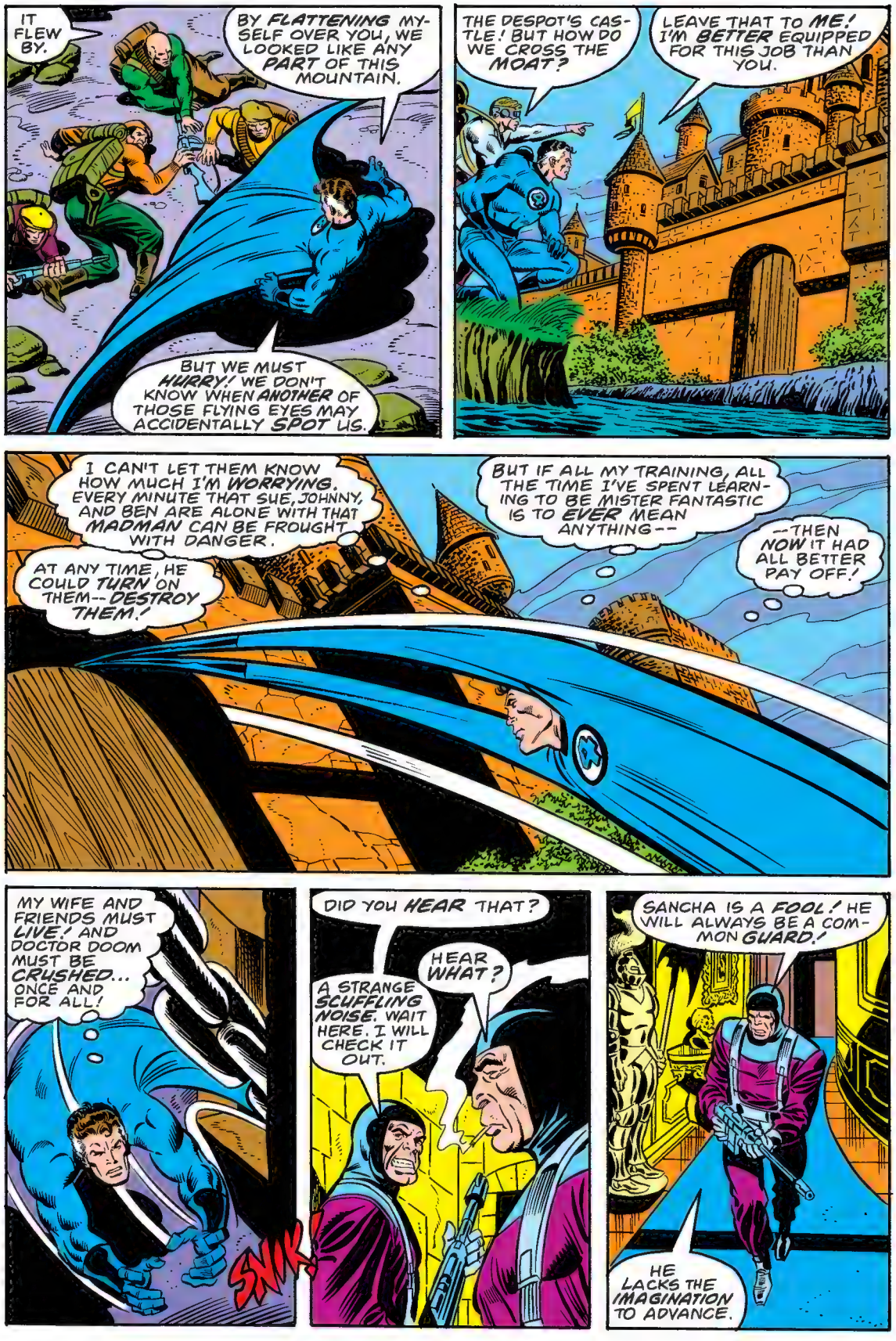

BUT NOW WE MUST ACT WITH GREAT HASTE. DOOM HAS RESURRECTED AN ANCIENT LATVERIAN LAW THAT DEMANDS HE ABDICATE HIS THRONE.
...BUT HE HAS NAMED HIS OWN SUCCESSOR, ONE WE FEAR EVEN MORE THAN DOOM HIMSELF.
OBVIOUSLY, THIS IS PART OF DOOM'S PLAN-- WHATEVER IT MAY BE.

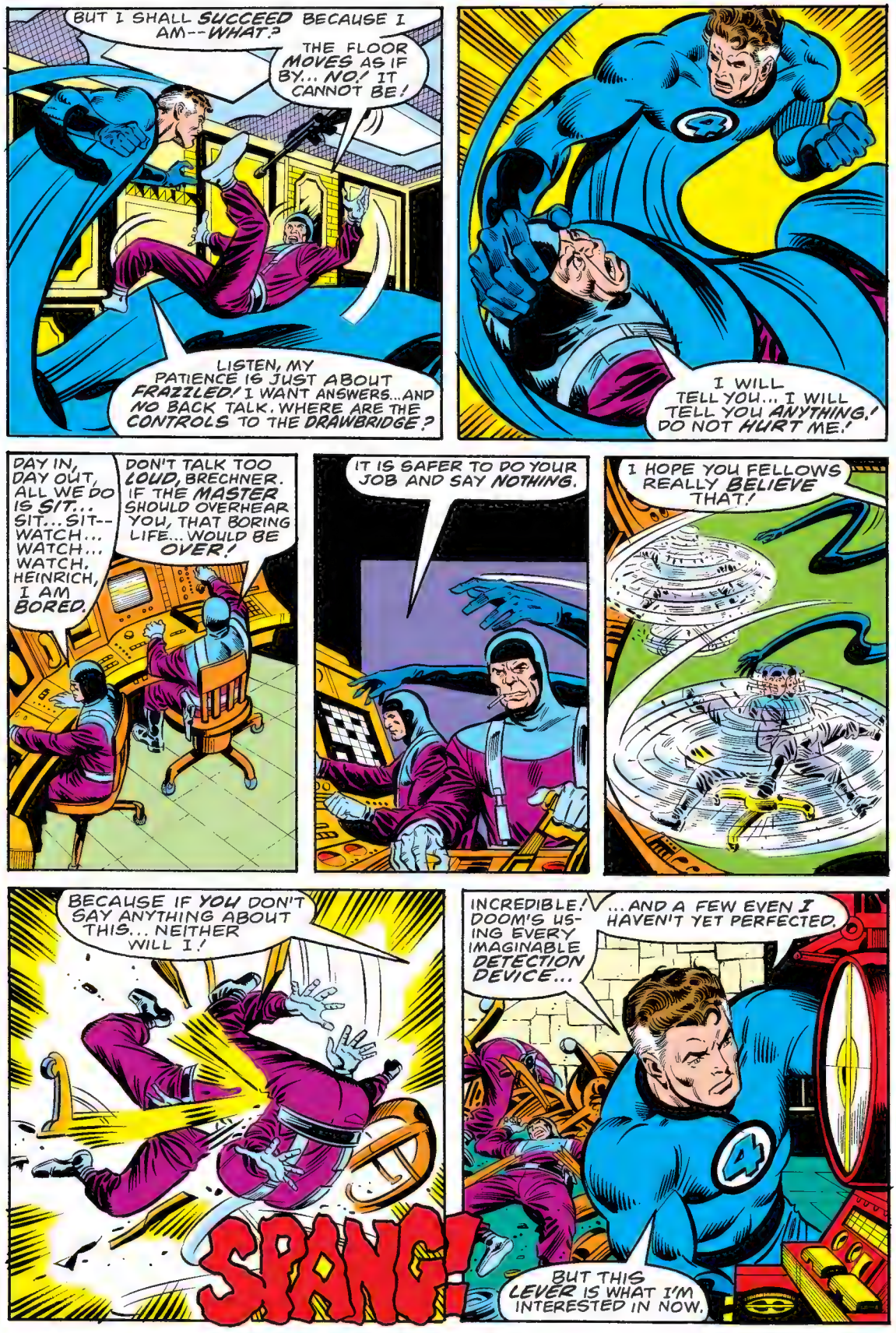

ONE WE NEVER KNEW LIVED, BEFORE NOW-- DOOM'S OWN SON!
WHAT!
FOR ONCE, EVEN THE USUALLY LACONIC REED RICHARDS IS STRUCK SPEECHLESS.

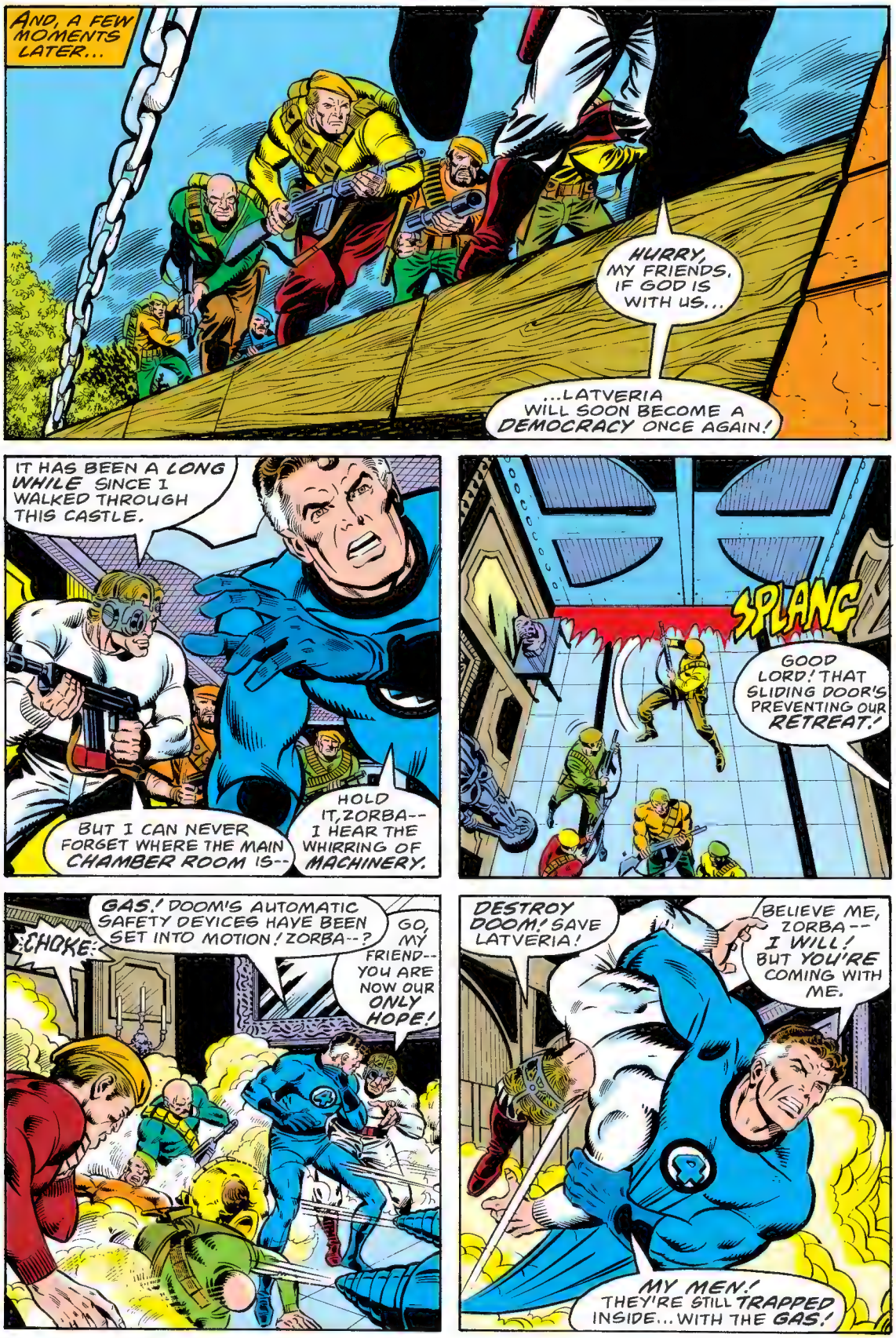

THE FORTRESS OF DOCTOR DOOM IS COLD, THOUGH A FLAME ROARS WITHIN ITS STONE-LINED FIREPLACE, AND THE WINDOWS HAVE BEEN SHUT AND BOLTED FROM INSIDE...
YER BONKERS, DOOMSIE, YA GOT A PUSS THAT MAKES MINE LOOK LIKE ROBBIE REDFORD'S!
YOU SICKENING GROTESQUE GARGOYLE--YOUR LIFE IS IMPERILED WITH EVERY ARROGANT WORD YOU SPUTTER.
YOU ARE REMARKABLE, MY DEAR. ALREADY I SENSE MY GREATNESS IN THE STATUE'S STANCE. YOU PORTRAY ME AS A PROUD AND POWERFUL RULER AMONG RULERS.
AND WHEN YOU CHISEL MY FEATURES AS THEY WERE BEFORE MY FACE WAS SO HORRIBLY SCARRED, ALL THE WORLD SHALL KNOW ME AS THE GREAT EMPEROR THAT I AM!
SILENCE, OR YOU SHALL NOT BE PERMITTED TO LIVE A MOMENT MORE.
BEN CHUCKLES AS DOOM'S EYES BURN RED WITH HATE, THEN...
IT IS TIME FOR THE TRANSFERENCE TO TAKE PLACE.
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THE MACHINES TO BE COMPLETED.
CONTINUE WITH YOUR FINE WORK, MY DEAR, AND I SHALL RETURN SHORTLY.
BUT REMEMBER, THE FACE MUST BE WITHOUT FAULT!
ANY ERROR AND YOU SHALL SUFFER THE SAME FATE THAT AWAITS YOUR MONSTROUS FRIEND! GUARDS--REMOVE THEM TO THE TRANSFERENCE ROOM!
DOOM IS STRANGELY SILENT AS HE REPLACES THE IRON MASK.
HE HAS WORN IT FOR SO MANY YEARS, YET IT STILL FEELS LIKE A COLD, DARK PRISON.
MOVE IT!
DON'T ANTAGONIZE THEM, JOHNNY. THEY'RE CAPABLE OF ANYTHING!
CUT THAT OUT, CREEP!
POINT THAT PIG-STICKER ELSEWHERE, CHARLIE, OR MEBBE I'LL JUST STUFF IT UP YER NOSE--SIDEWAYS!

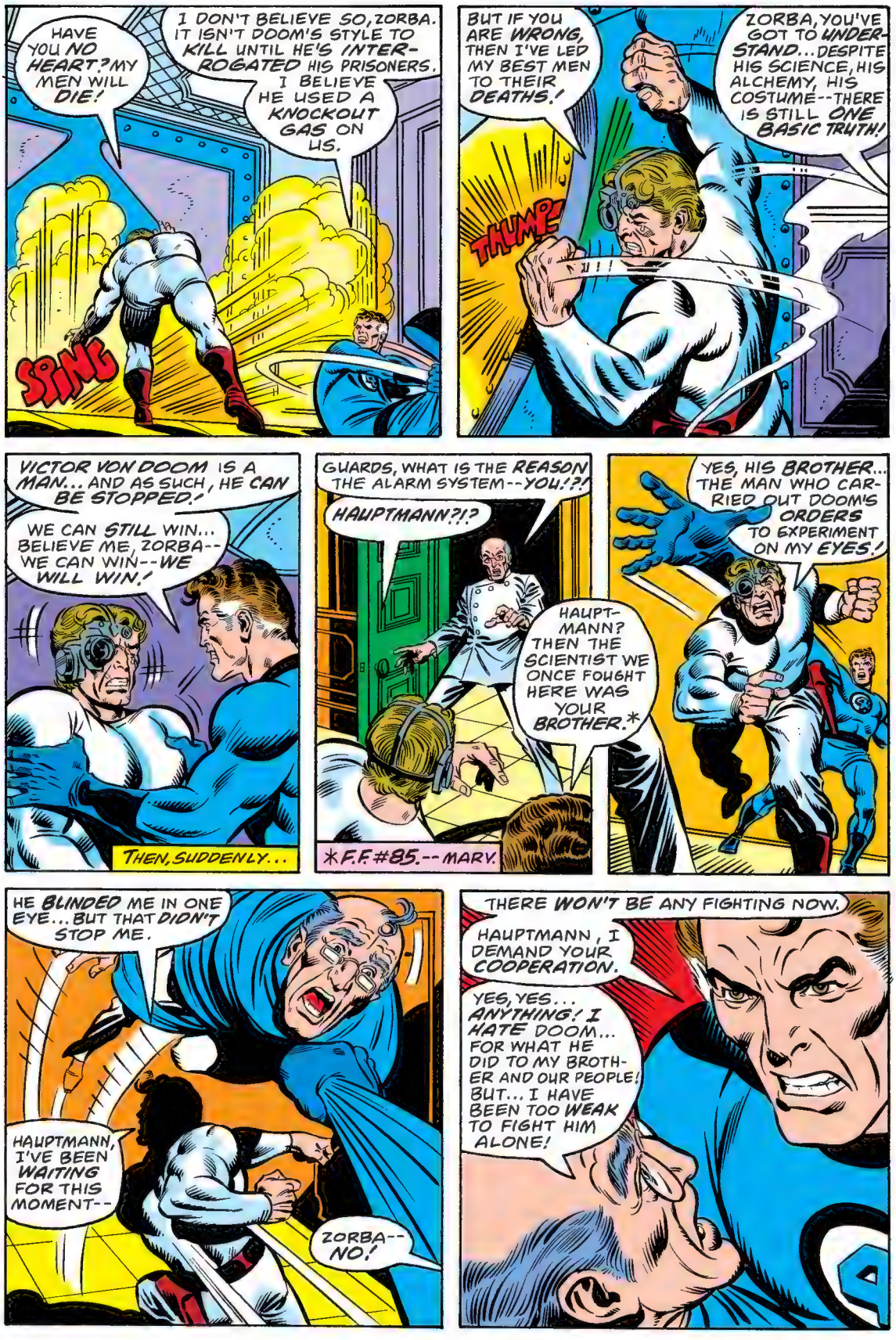

THEY ARE LED THROUGH THE GIANT MAZE THAT IS DOOM'S CASTLE KEEP, PAST DUNGEONS JAMMED WITH POLITICAL PRISONERS, PAST ROOMS BRIMMING WITH THE SPOILS OF RECENT WARS, PAST DOORS BARRED FROM ENTRANCE BY ANY BUT DOOM HIMSELF. THEN...
MY FOES ARE UNCONSCIOUS WITHIN THE TRANSFERENCE GLOBES! ARE WE READY?
I AM! I HAVE BEEN AWAITING THIS DAY SINCE MY BIRTH!
AS HAVE I! SOON THEIR POWERS WILL BE YOURS!
A PITY RICHARDS HAD TO DIE! BUT PERHAPS IT IS FATE THAT THE POWERS OF MY GREATEST ENEMY COULD NOT BE HARNESSED BY ME... THE ONLY MORTAL WHO WAS RICHARDS' BETTER.
MORE'S THE PITY-- I WANTED RICHARDS HUMBLED. I WANTED TO END THE ARROGANT WAY HE HAS ALWAYS TREATED ME-- EVER SINCE OUR DAYS IN COLLEGE!
BUT MORE... I WANTED HIM TO SEE ME DECLARED RULER OF THE WORLD!
HIS DEATH SOURED THE SWEETNESS OF MY TRIUMPH.
BUT IT WILL NOT CHEAT ME OF MY ULTIMATE VICTORY!


MEANWHILE, THE ALLEGEDLY DECEASED LEADER OF THE F.F. IS PREPARING AN ASSAULT ON DOOM'S DEADLY FORTRESS...
I DISAGREE, ZORBA--A DIRECT APPROACH TO DOOM COULD PROVE FATAL!
OUR BEST HOPE IS TO CLIMB THIS UNSCALEABLE MOUNTAIN!
BUT MY MEN COULD NEVER HOPE TO CLIMB IT!
THEN PERHAPS IT'S TIME I SHOWED YOU WHY I HAVE THE RATHER PRESUMPTUOUS ACTION-NAME OF MISTER FANTASTIC!
AN ELONGATED ARM STRETCHES TOWARD A DISTANT PEAK, AND SHORTLY...
OUR COMBINED WEIGHTS MUST BE PAINFUL. HOW ARE YOU HOLDING UP?
BETTER THAN I DARED HOPE, ZORBA.
WHEN I REGAINED MY POWERS, THEY WERE STRENGTHENED AS WELL.
ONCE MY WHOLE BACK WOULD HAVE THROBBED IN AGONY. NOW ONLY MY SHOULDERS ACHE.
ZORBA! LOOK!
STAND STILL! DOOM'S FLYING EYE-SPY!
AND, IN DOOM'S GUARDED CONTROL ROOM...
NOTHING ON SCANNER NUMBER 4!
DID YOU EXPECT THERE WOULD BE, HEINRICH? SIGHHHH...
SAY, DID I TELL YOU WHAT MY LITTLE ZARA DID YESTERDAY? SHE IS ONLY TWO, AND...

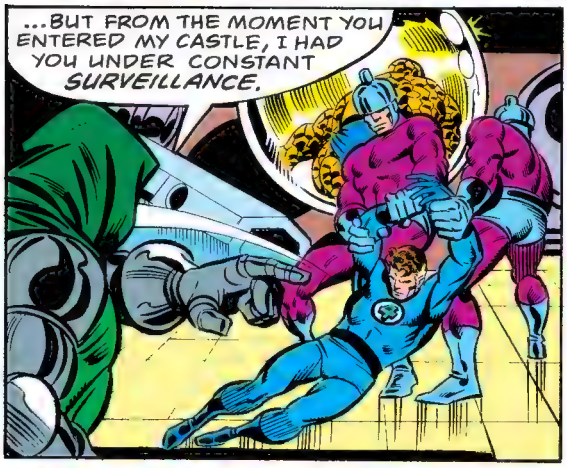

IT FLEW BY.
BY FLATTENING MYSELF OVER YOU, WE LOOKED LIKE ANY PART OF THIS MOUNTAIN.
BUT WE MUST HURRY! WE DON'T KNOW WHEN ANOTHER OF THOSE FLYING EYES MAY ACCIDENTALLY SPOT US.
THE DESPOT'S CASTLE! BUT HOW DO WE CROSS THE MOAT?
LEAVE THAT TO ME! I'M BETTER EQUIPPED FOR THIS JOB THAN YOU.
I CAN'T LET THEM KNOW HOW MUCH I'M WORRYING. EVERY MINUTE THAT SUE, JOHNNY, AND BEN ARE ALONE WITH THAT MADMAN CAN BE FROUGHT WITH DANGER.
AT ANY TIME, HE COULD TURN ON THEM--DESTROY THEM!
BUT IF ALL MY TRAINING, ALL THE TIME I'VE SPENT LEARNING TO BE MISTER FANTASTIC IS TO EVER MEAN ANYTHING--
--THEN NOW IT HAD ALL BETTER PAY OFF!
MY WIFE AND FRIENDS MUST LIVE! AND DOCTOR DOOM MUST BE CRUSHED... ONCE AND FOR ALL!
SNIK!
DID YOU HEAR THAT?
HEAR WHAT?
A STRANGE SCUFFLING NOISE. WAIT HERE. I WILL CHECK IT OUT.
SANCHA IS A FOOL! HE WILL ALWAYS BE A COMMON GUARD!
HE LACKS THE IMAGINATION TO ADVANCE.

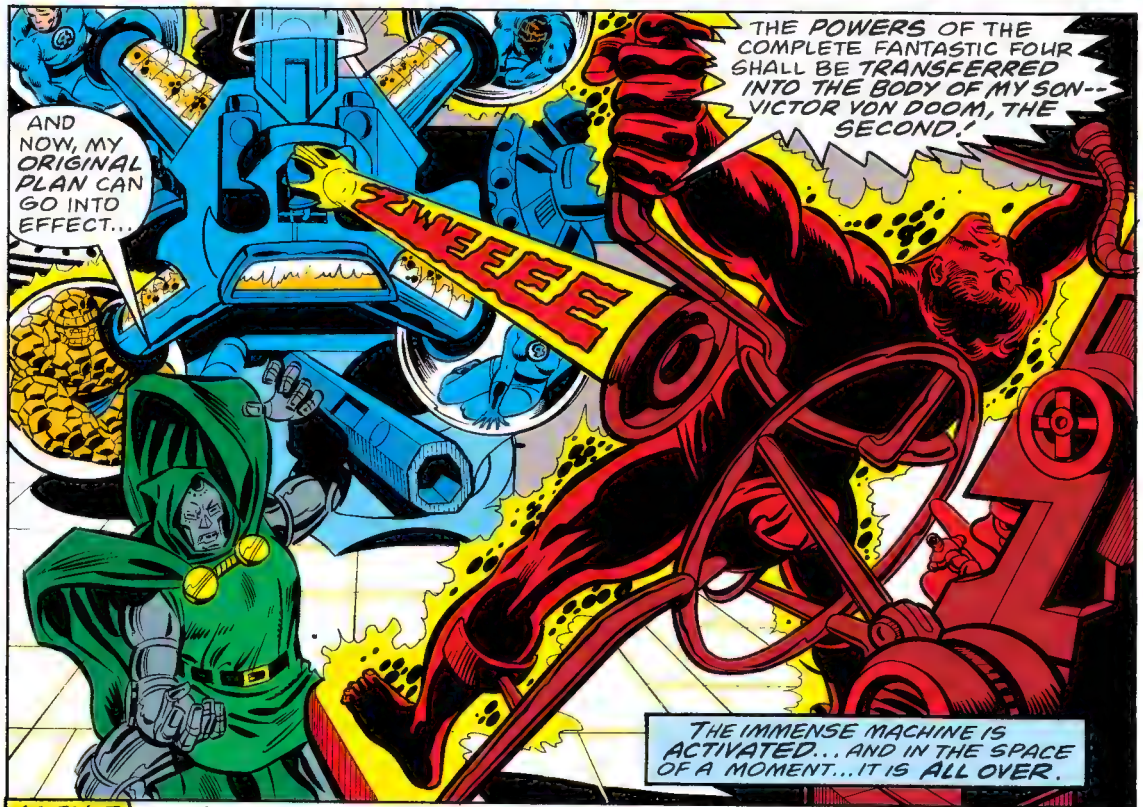

BUT I SHALL SUCCEED BECAUSE I AM--WHAT?
THE FLOOR MOVES AS IF BY... NO! IT CANNOT BE!
LISTEN, MY PATIENCE IS JUST ABOUT FRAZZLED! I WANT ANSWERS...AND NO BACK TALK. WHERE ARE THE CONTROLS TO THE DRAWBRIDGE?
I WILL TELL YOU... I WILL TELL YOU ANYTHING! DO NOT HURT ME!
DAY IN, DAY OUT, ALL WE DO IS SIT... SIT... SIT--WATCH... WATCH... WATCH. HEINRICH, I AM BORED.
DON'T TALK TOO LOUD, BRECHNER. IF THE MASTER SHOULD OVERHEAR YOU, THAT BORING LIFE... WOULD BE OVER!
IT IS SAFER TO DO YOUR JOB AND SAY NOTHING.
I HOPE YOU FELLOWS REALLY BELIEVE THAT!
BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THIS... NEITHER WILL I!
SPANG!
INCREDIBLE! DOOM'S USING EVERY IMAGINABLE DETECTION DEVICE...
...AND A FEW EVEN I HAVEN'T YET PERFECTED.
BUT THIS LEVER IS WHAT I'M INTERESTED IN NOW.


AND, A FEW MOMENTS LATER...
HURRY, MY FRIENDS, IF GOD IS WITH US...
...LATVERIA WILL SOON BECOME A DEMOCRACY ONCE AGAIN!
IT HAS BEEN A LONG WHILE SINCE I WALKED THROUGH THIS CASTLE.
BUT I CAN NEVER FORGET WHERE THE MAIN CHAMBER ROOM IS--
HOLD IT, ZORBA-- I HEAR THE WHIRRING OF MACHINERY.
SPLANG
GOOD LORD! THAT SLIDING DOOR'S PREVENTING OUR RETREAT!
CHOKE!
GAS! DOOM'S AUTOMATIC SAFETY DEVICES HAVE BEEN SET INTO MOTION! ZORBA--?
GO, MY FRIEND-- YOU ARE NOW OUR ONLY HOPE!
DESTROY DOOM! SAVE LATVERIA!
BELIEVE ME, ZORBA-- I WILL! BUT YOU'RE COMING WITH ME.
MY MEN! THEY'RE STILL TRAPPED INSIDE... WITH THE GAS!


HAVE YOU NO HEART? MY MEN WILL DIE!
I DON'T BELIEVE SO, ZORBA. IT ISN'T DOOM'S STYLE TO KILL UNTIL HE'S INTERROGATED HIS PRISONERS.
I BELIEVE HE USED A KNOCKOUT GAS ON US.
SPING
BUT IF YOU ARE WRONG, THEN I'VE LED MY BEST MEN TO THEIR DEATHS!
ZORBA, YOU'VE GOT TO UNDERSTAND... DESPITE HIS SCIENCE, HIS ALCHEMY, HIS COSTUME--THERE IS STILL ONE BASIC TRUTH!
THUMP!
VICTOR VON DOOM IS A MAN... AND AS SUCH, HE CAN BE STOPPED!
WE CAN STILL WIN... BELIEVE ME, ZORBA-- WE CAN WIN--WE WILL WIN!
THEN, SUDDENLY...
GUARDS, WHAT IS THE REASON THE ALARM SYSTEM--YOU!?!
HAUPTMANN?!?
HAUPTMANN? THEN THE SCIENTIST WE ONCE FOUGHT HERE WAS YOUR BROTHER.*
*F.F. #85.--MARV.
YES, HIS BROTHER... THE MAN WHO CARRIED OUT DOOM'S ORDERS TO EXPERIMENT ON MY EYES!
HE BLINDED ME IN ONE EYE... BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP ME.
HAUPTMANN, I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT--
ZORBA-- NO!
THERE WON'T BE ANY FIGHTING NOW.
HAUPTMANN, I DEMAND YOUR COOPERATION.
YES, YES... ANYTHING! I HATE DOOM... FOR WHAT HE DID TO MY BROTHER AND OUR PEOPLE! BUT... I HAVE BEEN TOO WEAK TO FIGHT HIM ALONE!

DOCTOR DOOM'S CHAMBER IS CHARGED WITH ELECTRICITY AS A SONIC KEYBOARD COMES ALIVE WITH THE APPASSIONATA SONATA BY BEETHOVEN. IT IS A DARK, MOODY DIRGE...
...THAT COULD VERY LIKELY SPELL THE END OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR...
BUT...
SIR! WE HAVE BEEN INVADED--IT IS THE UNDERGROUND!
TAKE CARE OF IT, YOU SNIVELLING CARRION! NOW, AWAY... I WILL BROOK NO INTERFERENCE WITH MY CONCERT.
BUT SIR, I HAVE TAKEN CARE OF IT... THOUGH A FEW ESCAPED THE GAS TRAPS.
AND WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO ABOUT IT, CRETIN...?
ESPECIALLY AS I HAVE SEEN THROUGH YOUR RATHER FLIMSY DISGUISE. DID YOU TRULY BELIEVE YOU COULD EVEN STRETCH YOURSELF INTO A SHAPE I COULD NOT SEE THROUGH?
GAS!
ZAK
IT'S NUMBING... ME TOO FAST... CAN'T EVEN... STRETCH OUT OF... THE WAY IN TIME...
UNGGHHHH...
IT HAS TAKEN A VERY LONG TIME, RICHARDS-- BUT AT LAST MY GREATEST FOE IS DEFEATED!




AND NOW, MY ORIGINAL PLAN CAN GO INTO EFFECT...
ZWEEE
THE POWERS OF THE COMPLETE FANTASTIC FOUR SHALL BE TRANSFERRED INTO THE BODY OF MY SON-- VICTOR VON DOOM, THE SECOND!
THE IMMENSE MACHINE IS ACTIVATED... AND IN THE SPACE OF A MOMENT...IT IS ALL OVER.

NEXT ISSUE

WE'VE KEPT YOU GUESSING LONG ENOUGH! THE SOUL-SHATTERING SECRET OF

THE SON OF DOCTOR DOOM!

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FANTASTIC FOUR®
WHAT IS THE STARTLING SECRET OF THE SON OF DOCTOR DOOM!
TO RULE THE WORLD, I MUST SLAY MY OWN SON!
IF YOU DO, THEN YOU SHALL DIE AS WELL!
pollard
SINNOTT

A brilliant scientist— his best friend— the woman he loves— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human!

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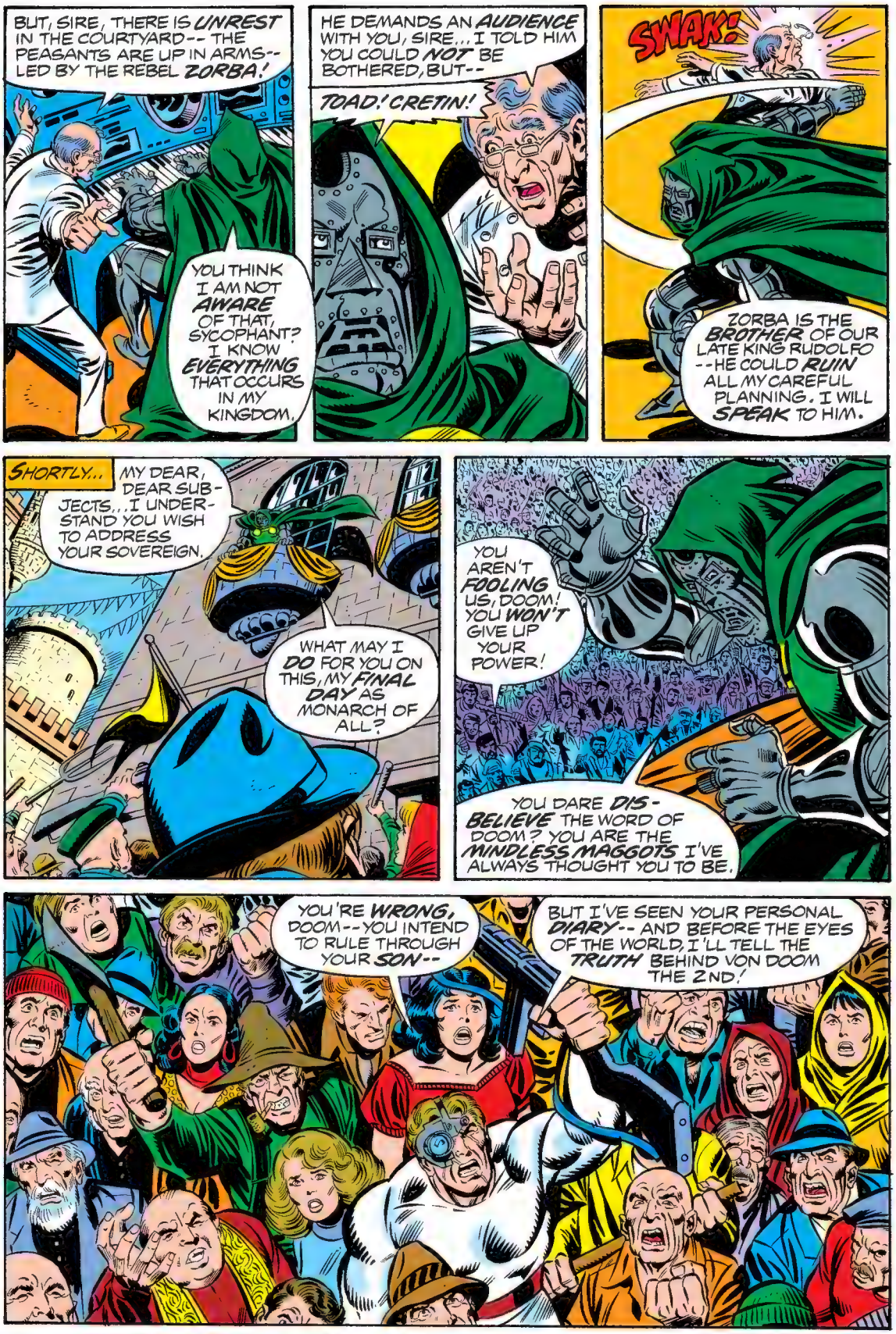
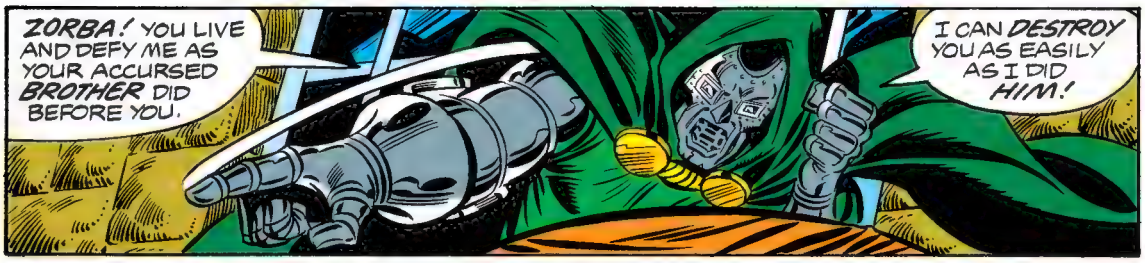
AT LONG LAST, MY GREATEST FOES ARE TRAPPED WITHIN MY TRANS-FERENCE GLOBES...
...WHERE EVER-SO-SOON THEY SHALL AWAKEN TO FIND THEIR POWERS HAVE BEEN EXTRACT-ED--
--AND IMPLANTED INTO THE WAITING BODY OF...
THE SON OF DOCTOR DOOM!

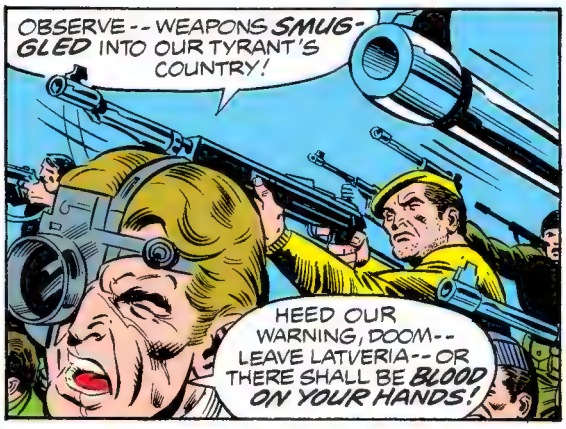
PART 4 OF THE GREATEST F.F. EPIC OF ALL!

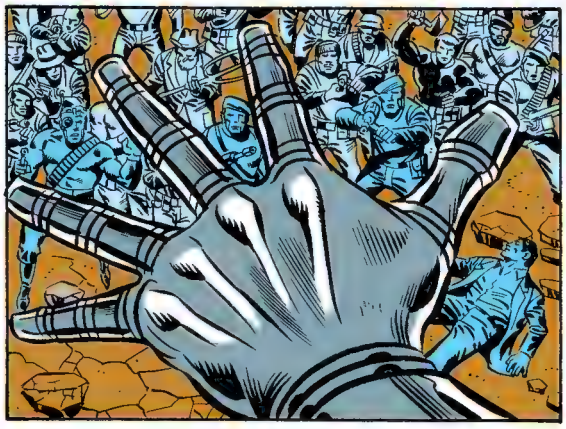
TOO OFTEN HAVE I BEEN STALEMATED BY THAT ACCURSED QUARTET--
BUT NEVER AGAIN! WHEN I HAVE COMPLETED THE SYMPHONY...
...THEY SHALL BE POWERLESS CLODS--AND DOOM SHALL CONTROL THE WORLD!
AHHHH, THE SONIC KEYBOARD PLAYS WITH PERFECTION... NEVER HAVE I HEARD ITS TUNE SOUND SWEETER!
BUT I MUST STILL MAKE CERTAIN THAT NO ONE DISCOVERS MY ULTIMATE PLAN.
THE CORONATION CEREMONY MUST CONTINUE AS DESIGNED... THE MONARCHY OF LATVERIA MUST SEEMINGLY PASS FROM MY HANDS...
...AND REST IN MY SON'S!
ONLY WHEN I HAVE RELINQUISHED ALL MY POWER CAN DOOM BE TRULY SUPREME!
EXCELLENCY! I MUST SPEAK WITH YOU!
WHAT? YOU DARE INTERRUPT THE FINAL OVERTURE? HAUPTMANN, YOU CRAWLING LITTLE CARRION, WITH EVERY PASSING MOMENT, YOU BECOME MORE EXPENDABLE!


BUT, SIRE, THERE IS UNREST IN THE COURTYARD-- THE PEASANTS ARE UP IN ARMS-- LED BY THE REBEL ZORBA!
YOU THINK I AM NOT AWARE OF THAT, SYCOPHANT? I KNOW EVERYTHING THAT OCCURS IN MY KINGDOM.
HE DEMANDS AN AUDIENCE WITH YOU, SIRE... I TOLD HIM YOU COULD NOT BE BOTHERED, BUT--
TOAD! CRETIN!
SWAK!
ZORBA IS THE BROTHER OF OUR LATE KING RUDOLFO --HE COULD RUIN ALL MY CAREFUL PLANNING. I WILL SPEAK TO HIM.
SHORTLY...
MY DEAR, DEAR SUBJECTS... I UNDERSTAND YOU WISH TO ADDRESS YOUR SOVEREIGN.
WHAT MAY I DO FOR YOU ON THIS, MY FINAL DAY AS MONARCH OF ALL?
YOU AREN'T FOOLING US, DOOM! YOU WON'T GIVE UP YOUR POWER!
YOU DARE DISBELIEVE THE WORD OF DOOM? YOU ARE THE MINDLESS MAGGOTS I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU TO BE.
YOU'RE WRONG, DOOM-- YOU INTEND TO RULE THROUGH YOUR SON--
BUT I'VE SEEN YOUR PERSONAL DIARY-- AND BEFORE THE EYES OF THE WORLD, I'LL TELL THE TRUTH BEHIND VON DOOM THE 2ND!

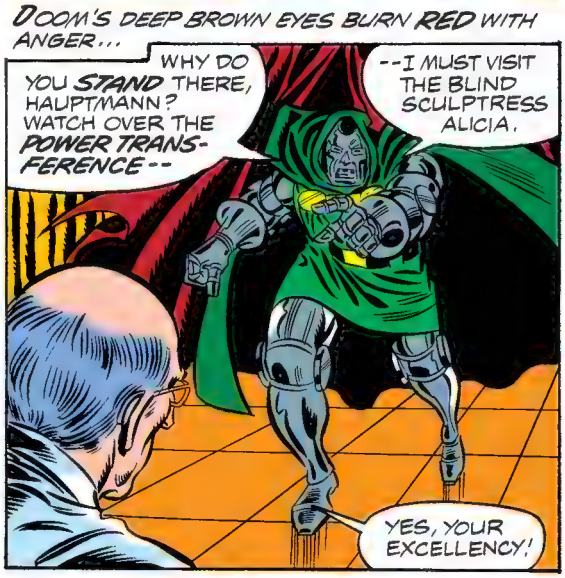

ZORBA! YOU LIVE AND DEFY ME AS YOUR ACCURSED BROTHER DID BEFORE YOU.
I CAN DESTROY YOU AS EASILY AS I DID HIM!

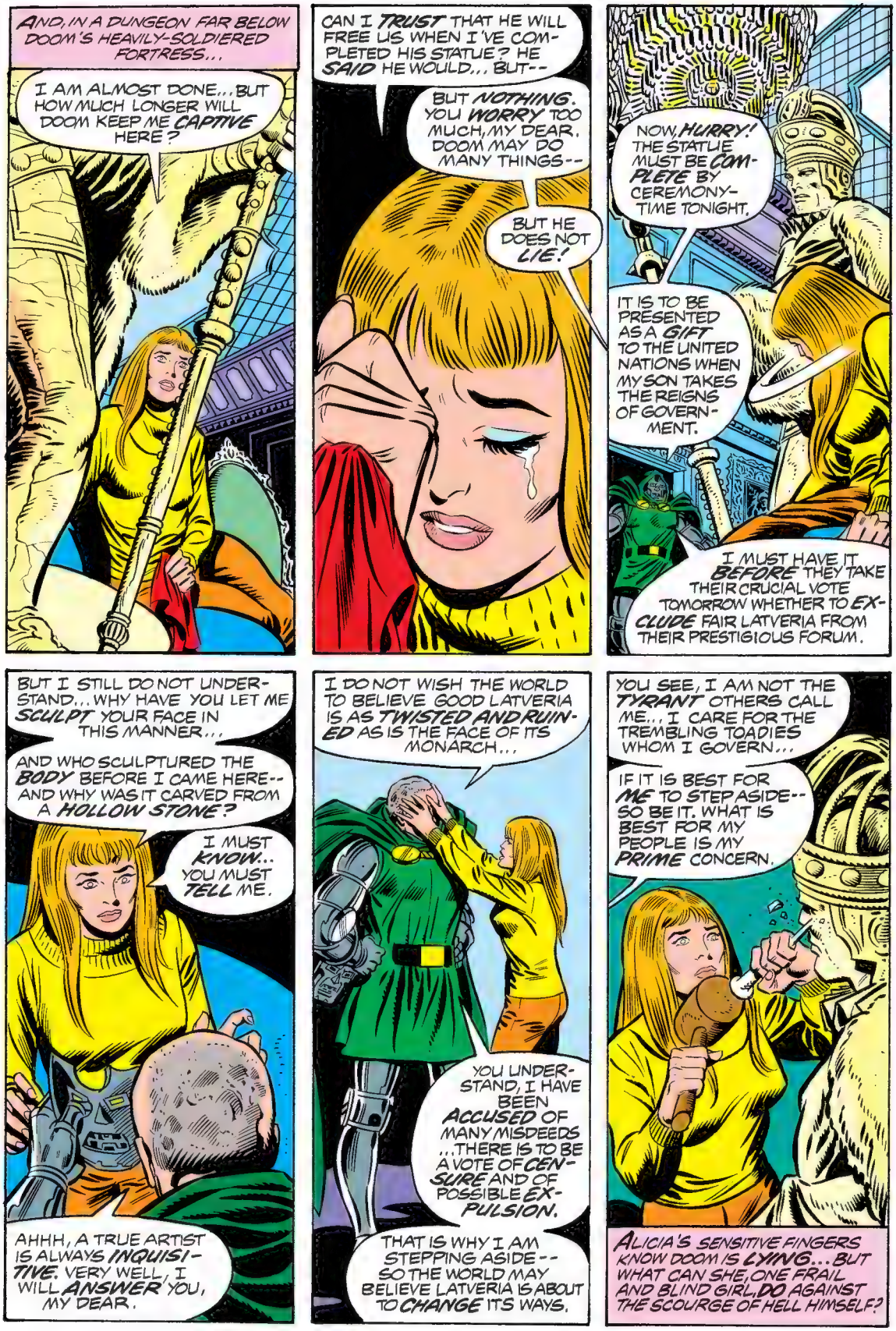
LOOK! HE USES THE INCREDIBLE POWER BUILT INTO HIS ARMOR. RUN!
SKRAK!
NO, MY FRIENDS-- WE HAVE POWER, TOO!

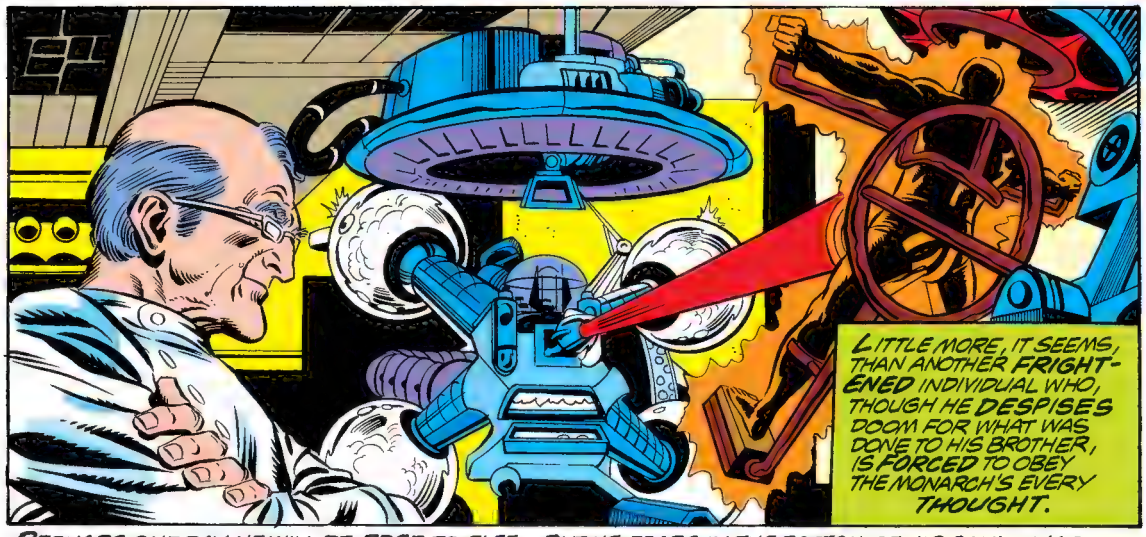

OBSERVE-- WEAPONS SMUGGLED INTO OUR TYRANT'S COUNTRY!
HEED OUR WARNING, DOOM-- LEAVE LATVERIA-- OR THERE SHALL BE BLOOD ON YOUR HANDS!



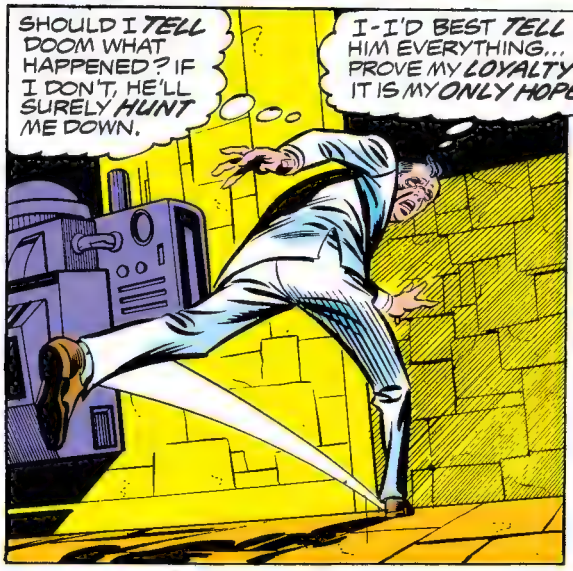
HOLD! LAY DOWN YOUR WEAPONS, MY LOYAL PEOPLE...
FORGIVE YOUR MONARCH IF I ALLOWED MYSELF A MOMENT OF... ANGER.
YOU SHALL SEE YOURSELF THAT WHEN THE CORONATION TAKES PLACE THIS NIGHT-- DOCTOR DOOM SHALL WIELD POWER NO LONGER.
I SHALL BE CONTENT TO GARDEN AWAY MY REMAINING YEARS.
TRUST YOUR SUPREME MONARCH... HE KNOWS WHAT IS BEST FOR ALL!

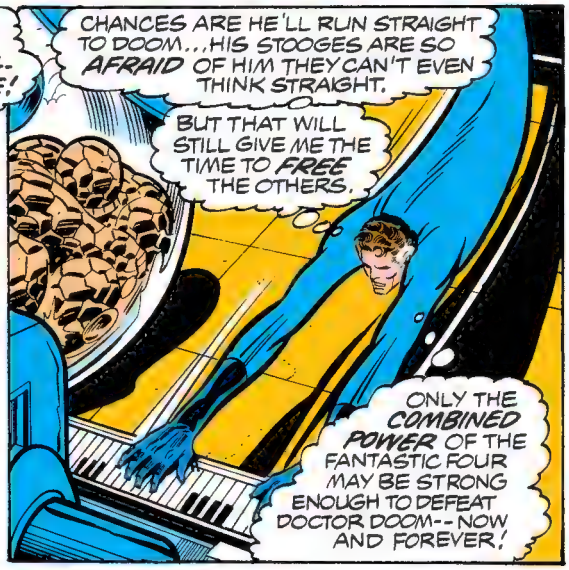

DOOM'S DEEP BROWN EYES BURN RED WITH ANGER...
WHY DO YOU STAND THERE, HAUPTMANN? WATCH OVER THE POWER TRANSFERENCE--
--I MUST VISIT THE BLIND SCULPTRESS ALICIA.
YES, YOUR EXCELLENCY!

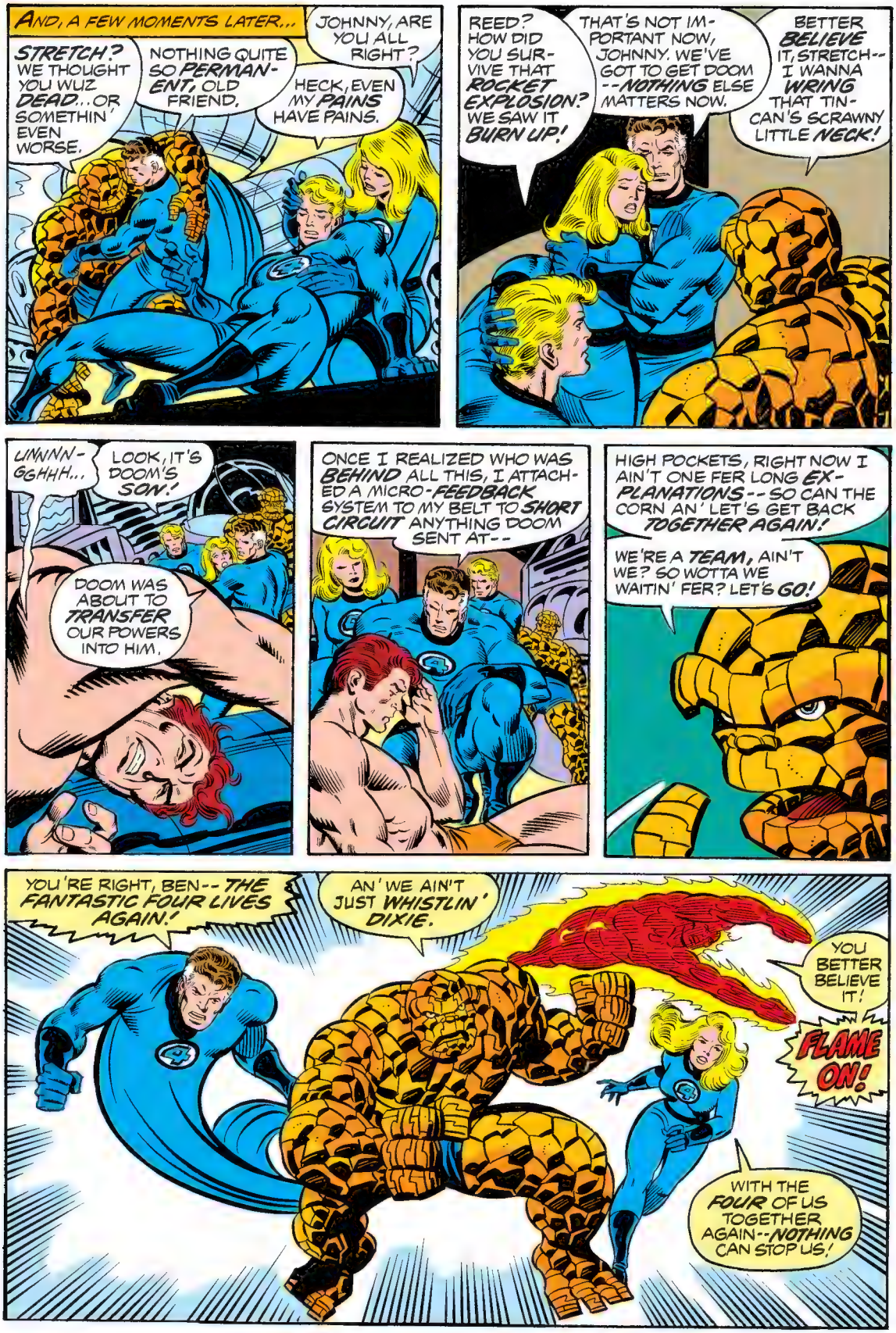

AND, IN A DUNGEON FAR BELOW DOOM'S HEAVILY-SOLDIERED FORTRESS...
I AM ALMOST DONE... BUT HOW MUCH LONGER WILL DOOM KEEP ME CAPTIVE HERE?
CAN I TRUST THAT HE WILL FREE US WHEN I'VE COMPLETED HIS STATUE? HE SAID HE WOULD... BUT--
BUT NOTHING. YOU WORRY TOO MUCH, MY DEAR. DOOM MAY DO MANY THINGS--
BUT HE DOES NOT LIE!
NOW, HURRY! THE STATUE MUST BE COMPLETE BY CEREMONY-TIME TONIGHT.
IT IS TO BE PRESENTED AS A GIFT TO THE UNITED NATIONS WHEN MY SON TAKES THE REIGNS OF GOVERNMENT.
I MUST HAVE IT BEFORE THEY TAKE THEIR CRUCIAL VOTE TOMORROW WHETHER TO EXCLUDE FAIR LATVERIA FROM THEIR PRESTIGIOUS FORUM.
BUT I STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND... WHY HAVE YOU LET ME SCULPT YOUR FACE IN THIS MANNER...
AND WHO SCULPTURED THE BODY BEFORE I CAME HERE-- AND WHY WAS IT CARVED FROM A HOLLOW STONE?
I MUST KNOW... YOU MUST TELL ME.
AHHH, A TRUE ARTIST IS ALWAYS INQUISITIVE. VERY WELL, I WILL ANSWER YOU, MY DEAR.
I DO NOT WISH THE WORLD TO BELIEVE GOOD LATVERIA IS AS TWISTED AND RUINED AS IS THE FACE OF ITS MONARCH...
YOU UNDERSTAND, I HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF MANY MISDEEDS ...THERE IS TO BE A VOTE OF CENSURE AND OF POSSIBLE EXPULSION.
THAT IS WHY I AM STEPPING ASIDE-- SO THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE LATVERIA IS ABOUT TO CHANGE ITS WAYS.
YOU SEE, I AM NOT THE TYRANT OTHERS CALL ME... I CARE FOR THE TREMBLING TOADIES WHOM I GOVERN...
IF IT IS BEST FOR ME TO STEP ASIDE-- SO BE IT. WHAT IS BEST FOR MY PEOPLE IS MY PRIME CONCERN.
ALICIA'S SENSITIVE FINGERS KNOW DOOM IS LYING... BUT WHAT CAN SHE, ONE FRAIL AND BLIND GIRL, DO AGAINST THE SCOURGE OF HELL HIMSELF?


A LITTLE MORE, IT SEEMS, THAN ANOTHER FRIGHTENED INDIVIDUAL WHO, THOUGH HE DESPISES DOOM FOR WHAT WAS DONE TO HIS BROTHER, IS FORCED TO OBEY THE MONARCH'S EVERY THOUGHT.

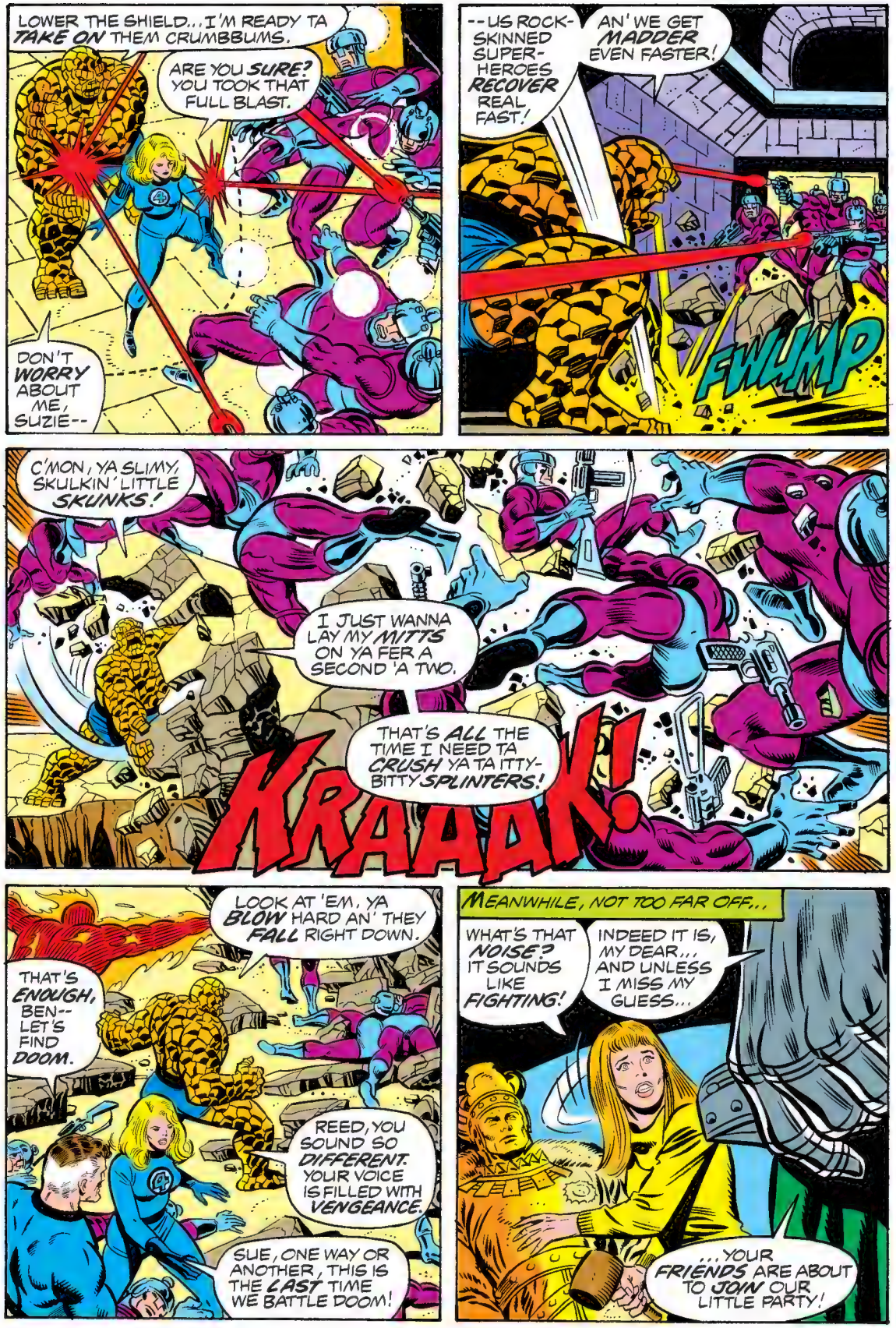
PERHAPS ONE DAY HE WILL BE FREE TO FLEE... BUT HE FEARS IN THE BOTTOM OF HIS SOUL, THAT BEFORE THAT DAY COMES... HE WILL BE LONG DEAD.

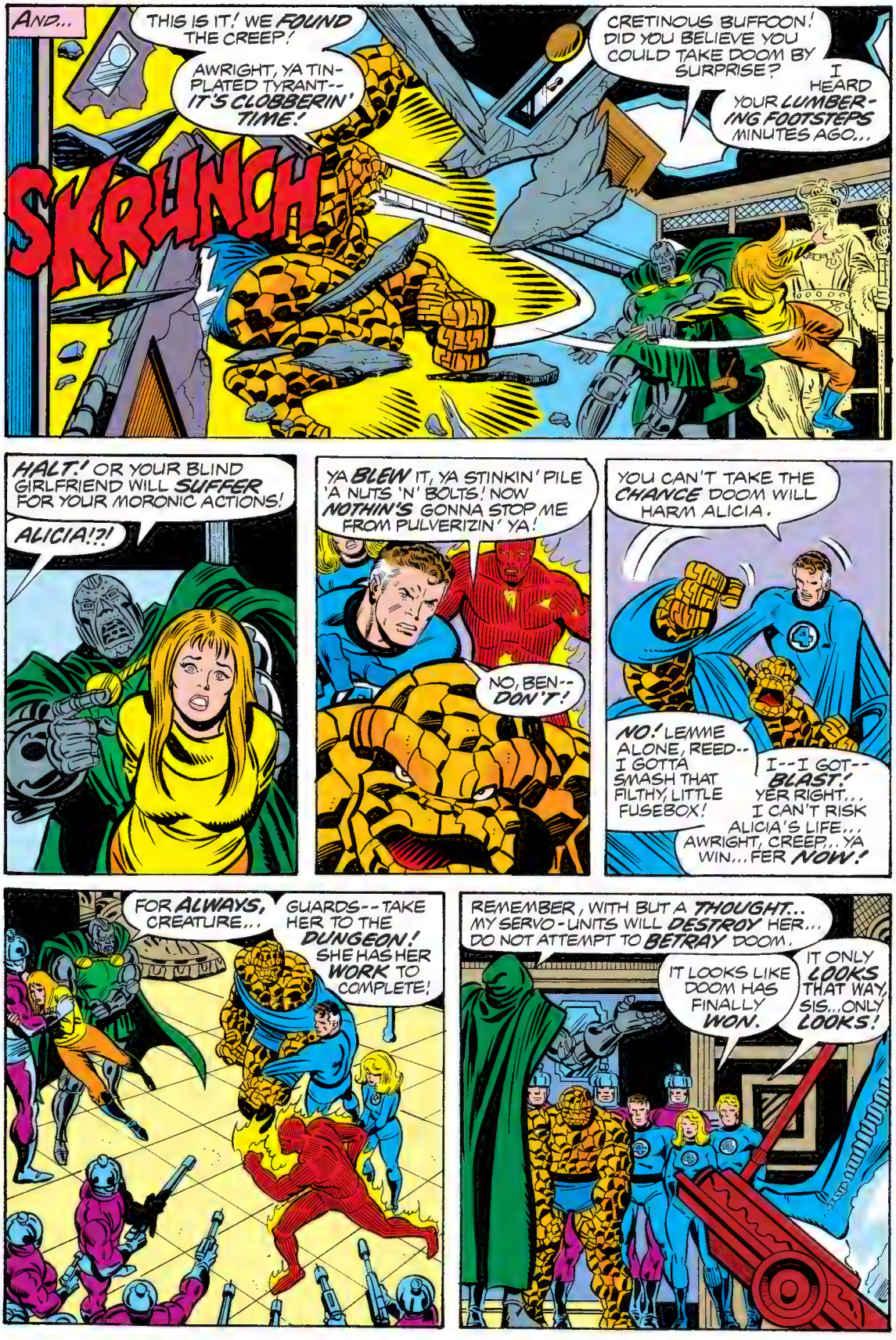

SHOULD I TELL DOOM WHAT HAPPENED? IF I DON'T, HE'LL SURELY HUNT ME DOWN.
I-I'D BEST TELL HIM EVERYTHING... PROVE MY LOYALTY-- IT IS MY ONLY HOPE!


CHANCES ARE HE'LL RUN STRAIGHT TO DOOM...HIS STOOGES ARE SO AFRAID OF HIM THEY CAN'T EVEN THINK STRAIGHT.
BUT THAT WILL STILL GIVE ME THE TIME TO FREE THE OTHERS.
ONLY THE COMBINED POWER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR MAY BE STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT DOCTOR DOOM--NOW AND FOREVER!

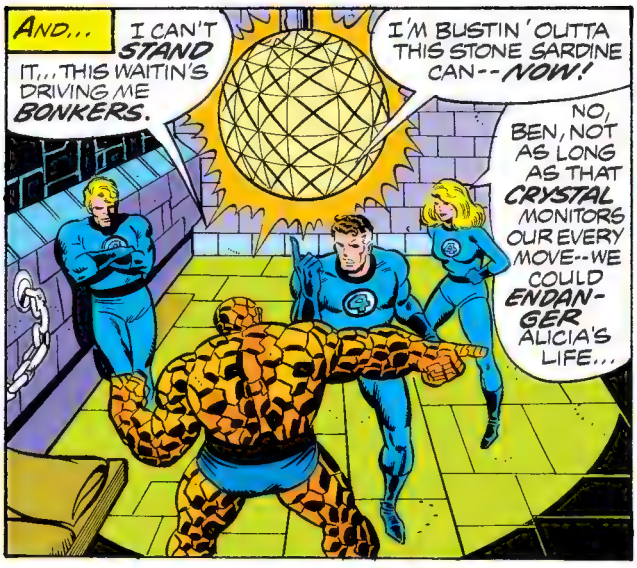

AND, A FEW MOMENTS LATER...
JOHNNY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
STRETCH? WE THOUGHT YOU WUZ DEAD...OR SOMETHIN' EVEN WORSE.
NOTHING QUITE SO PERMANENT, OLD FRIEND.
HECK, EVEN MY PAINS HAVE PAINS.
REED? HOW DID YOU SURVIVE THAT ROCKET EXPLOSION? WE SAW IT BURN UP!
THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT NOW, JOHNNY. WE'VE GOT TO GET DOOM --NOTHING ELSE MATTERS NOW.
BETTER BELIEVE IT, STRETCH-- I WANNA WRING THAT TINCAN'S SCRAWNY LITTLE NECK!
UNNNN-GGHHH...
LOOK, IT'S DOOM'S SON!
DOOM WAS ABOUT TO TRANSFER OUR POWERS INTO HIM.
ONCE I REALIZED WHO WAS BEHIND ALL THIS, I ATTACHED A MICRO-FEEDBACK SYSTEM TO MY BELT TO SHORT CIRCUIT ANYTHING DOOM SENT AT--
HIGH POCKETS, RIGHT NOW I AIN'T ONE FER LONG EXPLANATIONS-- SO CAN THE CORN AN' LET'S GET BACK TOGETHER AGAIN!
WE'RE A TEAM, AIN'T WE? SO WOTTA WE WAITIN' FER? LET'S GO!
YOU'RE RIGHT, BEN-- THE FANTASTIC FOUR LIVES AGAIN!
AN' WE AIN'T JUST WHISTLIN' DIXIE.
YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT!
FLAME ON!
WITH THE FOUR OF US TOGETHER AGAIN--NOTHING CAN STOP US!

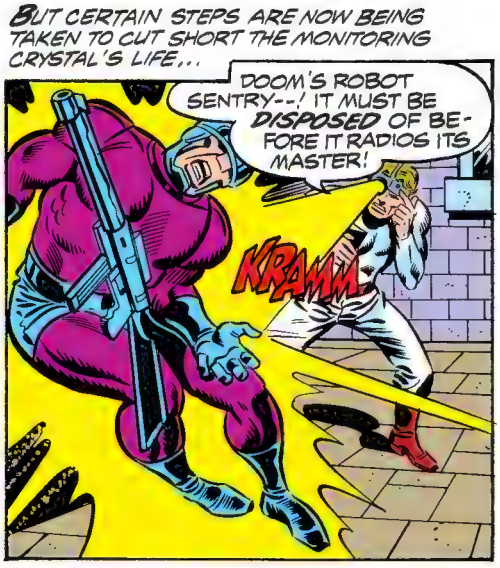
BEN, SLOW DOWN! IT ISN'T LIKE DOOM TO LEAVE THESE HALLS UNGUARDED!
WHO CARES ABOUT A COUPLE 'A GUARDS? WE FIND ANY, I'LL CLOBBER 'EM.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, THIS FORTRESS MAY BE MINED WITH TRAPS. AT ANY MOMENT, YOU--
I WAS RIGHT! THOSE ARE IONIC FORCE DIS-PLACERS!
ZWAK!
YEOWW!
AND LOOK, DOOM'S SERVO-GUARDS ARE RIGHT BEHIND.
ZWITT
ZWAMM
BUT THEY'RE NOTHING THE HUMAN TORCH CAN'T SLAG!
SUZIE, YA SET UP YER FORCE SHIELD JUST IN TIME.
PROTECT YOURSELF, JOHNNY... LET ME HANDLE THEM.
NO WAY, BROTHER-IN-LAW... I'VE BEEN COOPED UP TOO LONG!
I NEED EVERY BIT OF ACTION I CAN GET!
FWUMP!
NO ONE UNDERSTANDS! WE CAN'T WASTE TIME WITH ALL THESE DISTRACTIONS!
DOOM IS STILL WAITING IN THE WINGS!

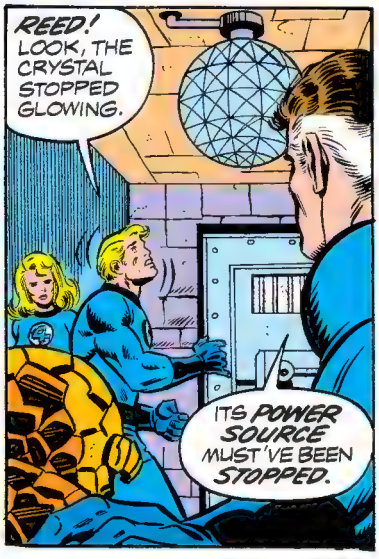

LOWER THE SHIELD.. I'M READY TA TAKE ON THEM CRUMBBUMS.
ARE YOU SURE? YOU TOOK THAT FULL BLAST.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, SUZIE--
--US ROCK-SKINNED SUPER-HEROES RECOVER REAL FAST!
AN' WE GET MADDER EVEN FASTER!
FWUMP
C'MON, YA SLIMY, SKULKIN' LITTLE SKUNKS!
I JUST WANNA LAY MY MITTS ON YA FER A SECOND 'A TWO.
THAT'S ALL THE TIME I NEED TA CRUSH YA TA ITTY-BITTY SPLINTERS!
KRAAAK!
LOOK AT 'EM, YA BLOW HARD AN' THEY FALL RIGHT DOWN.
THAT'S ENOUGH, BEN-- LET'S FIND DOOM.
REED, YOU SOUND SO DIFFERENT. YOUR VOICE IS FILLED WITH VENGEANCE.
SUE, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, THIS IS THE LAST TIME WE BATTLE DOOM!
MEANWHILE, NOT TOO FAR OFF...
WHAT'S THAT NOISE? IT SOUNDS LIKE FIGHTING!
INDEED IT IS, MY DEAR... AND UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS...
...YOUR FRIENDS ARE ABOUT TO JOIN OUR LITTLE PARTY!

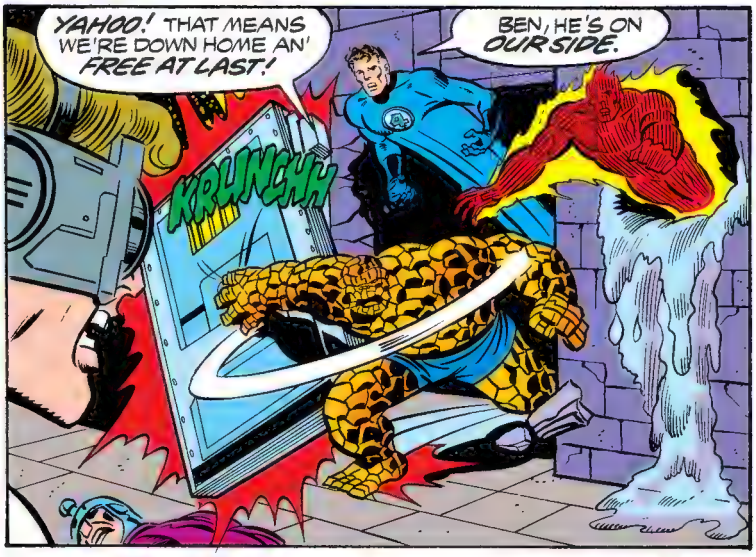

AND...
THIS IS IT! WE FOUND THE CREEP!
AWRIGHT, YA TIN-PLATED TYRANT-- IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!
SKRUNCH
CRETINOUS BUFFOON! DID YOU BELIEVE YOU COULD TAKE DOOM BY SURPRISE?
I HEARD YOUR LUMBERING FOOTSTEPS MINUTES AGO...
HALT! OR YOUR BLIND GIRLFRIEND WILL SUFFER FOR YOUR MORONIC ACTIONS!
ALICIA!?!
YA BLEW IT, YA STINKIN' PILE 'A NUTS 'N' BOLTS! NOW NOTHIN'S GONNA STOP ME FROM PULVERIZIN' YA!
NO, BEN-- DON'T!
YOU CAN'T TAKE THE CHANCE DOOM WILL HARM ALICIA.
NO! LEMME ALONE, REED-- I GOTTA SMASH THAT FILTHY, LITTLE FUSEBOX!
I--I GOT-- BLAST! YER RIGHT... I CAN'T RISK ALICIA'S LIFE... AWRIGHT, CREEP... YA WIN... FER NOW!
FOR ALWAYS, CREATURE...
GUARDS--TAKE HER TO THE DUNGEON! SHE HAS HER WORK TO COMPLETE!
REMEMBER, WITH BUT A THOUGHT.. MY SERVO-UNITS WILL DESTROY HER... DO NOT ATTEMPT TO BETRAY DOOM.
IT LOOKS LIKE DOOM HAS FINALLY WON.
IT ONLY LOOKS THAT WAY, SIS...ONLY LOOKS!

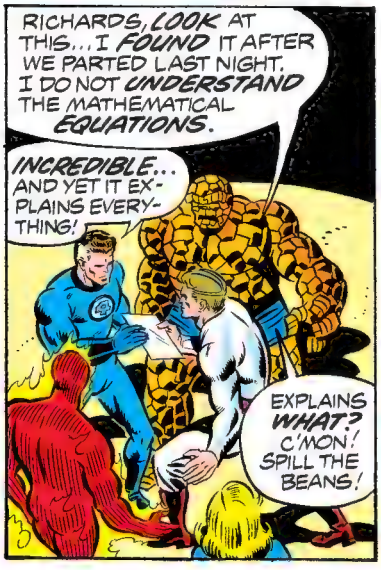
LET'S MOVE AHEAD A FEW HOURS WHERE WE JOIN THE EVENING'S FESTIVITIES NOW IN PROGRESS...
SILENCE! THE CEREMONY OF CORONATION BEGINS!
MY LOYAL SUBJECTS, I HAVE ALWAYS CONSIDERED YOU CLOSE TO MY HEART. INDEED, I HAVE ALWAYS PUT YOUR WELFARE EVEN BEFORE MY OWN.
WHY ELSE WOULD I CONSTRUCT MY SERVO-UNITS, IF NOT TO PROTECT YOU,..WHY ELSE WOULD I MAKE CERTAIN YOU ARE NEVER PERMITTED TO STRAY BEYOND OUR BORDERS, IF NOT TO HELP YOU AVOID THE POSSIBLE PERILS THE OUTSIDE WORLD MAY BRING.
TOO LONG HAS THE WORLD MISJUDGED DOOM... THEY HAVE ALWAYS CONSIDERED ME A DESPOT.. A DICTATOR, BUT THEY DO NOT KNOW HOW I WORRY ABOUT YOU SO.
BUT NOW, IT IS OVER. THE POWER AND THE SCEPTRE OF LATVERIA WILL BE GIVEN TO ONE WHOM FEW OF YOU EVEN KNEW EXISTED--
VICTOR VON DOOM THE 2ND-- MY SON!
KRONAR, KEEP AN EYE ON DOOM... I MUST MAKE MY WAY INSIDE THE CASTLE--
--AND FIND REED RICHARDS AND HIS FRIENDS.
IF EVER WE NEEDED THEIR POWER--THIS IS THE MOMENT!


AND,..
I CAN'T STAND IT,..THIS WAITIN'S DRIVING ME BONKERS.
I'M BUSTIN' OUTTA THIS STONE SARDINE CAN--NOW!
NO, BEN, NOT AS LONG AS THAT CRYSTAL MONITORS OUR EVERY MOVE--WE COULD ENDANGER ALICIA'S LIFE...


BUT CERTAIN STEPS ARE NOW BEING TAKEN TO CUT SHORT THE MONITORING CRYSTAL'S LIFE...
DOOM'S ROBOT SENTRY--! IT MUST BE DISPOSED OF BEFORE IT RADIOS ITS MASTER!
KRAMM


REED! LOOK, THE CRYSTAL STOPPED GLOWING.
ITS POWER SOURCE MUST'VE BEEN STOPPED.

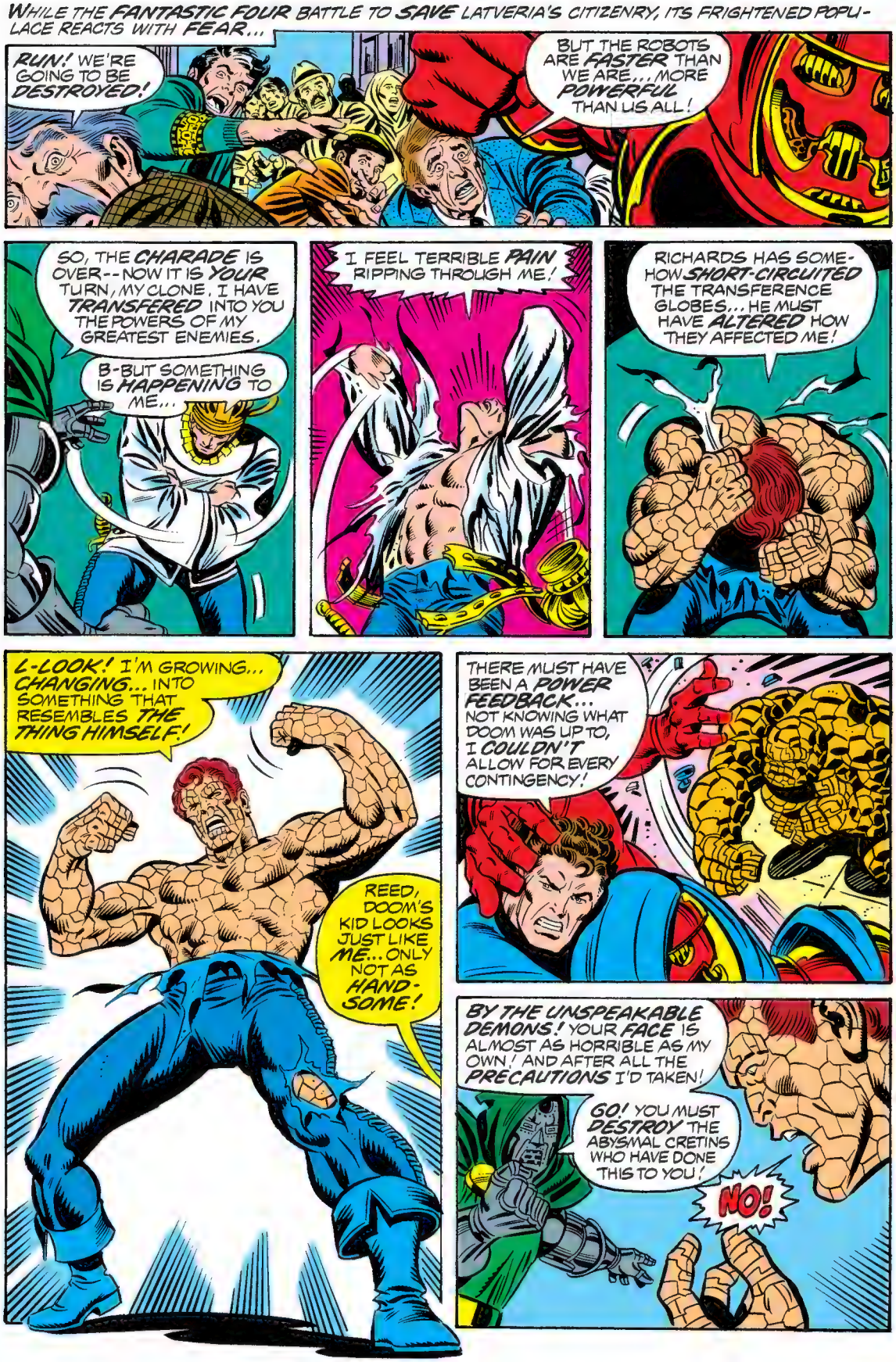

YAHOO! THAT MEANS WE'RE DOWN HOME AN' FREE AT LAST!
BEN, HE'S ON OUR SIDE.
KRUNCHH


RICHARDS, LOOK AT THIS...I FOUND IT AFTER WE PARTED LAST NIGHT. I DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE MATHEMATICAL EQUATIONS.
INCREDIBLE... AND YET IT EXPLAINS EVERYTHING!
EXPLAINS WHAT? C'MON! SPILL THE BEANS!

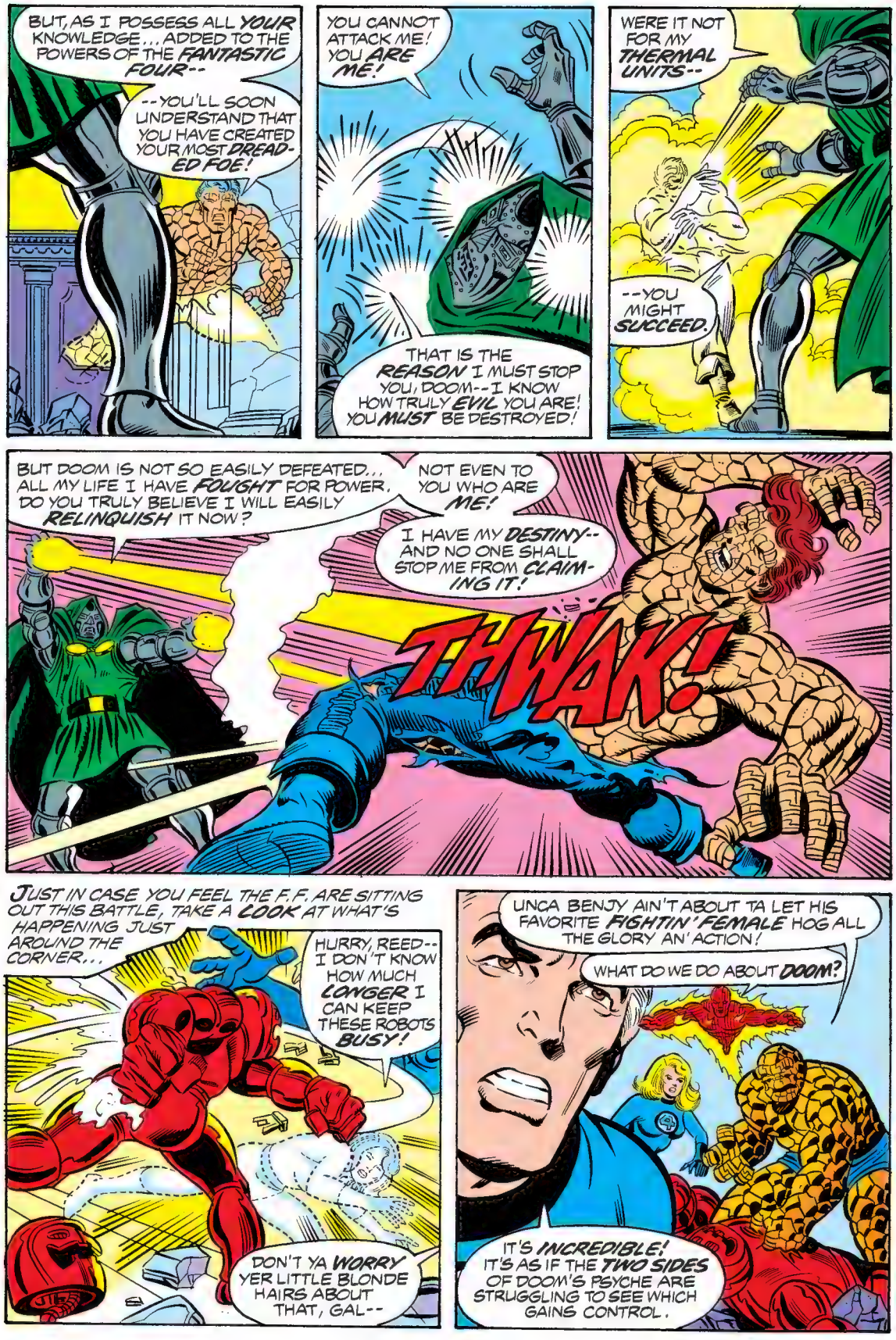
THERE'S NO TIME TO TALK, BEN--
NOW, MORE THEN EVER--DOOM MUST BE STOPPED!

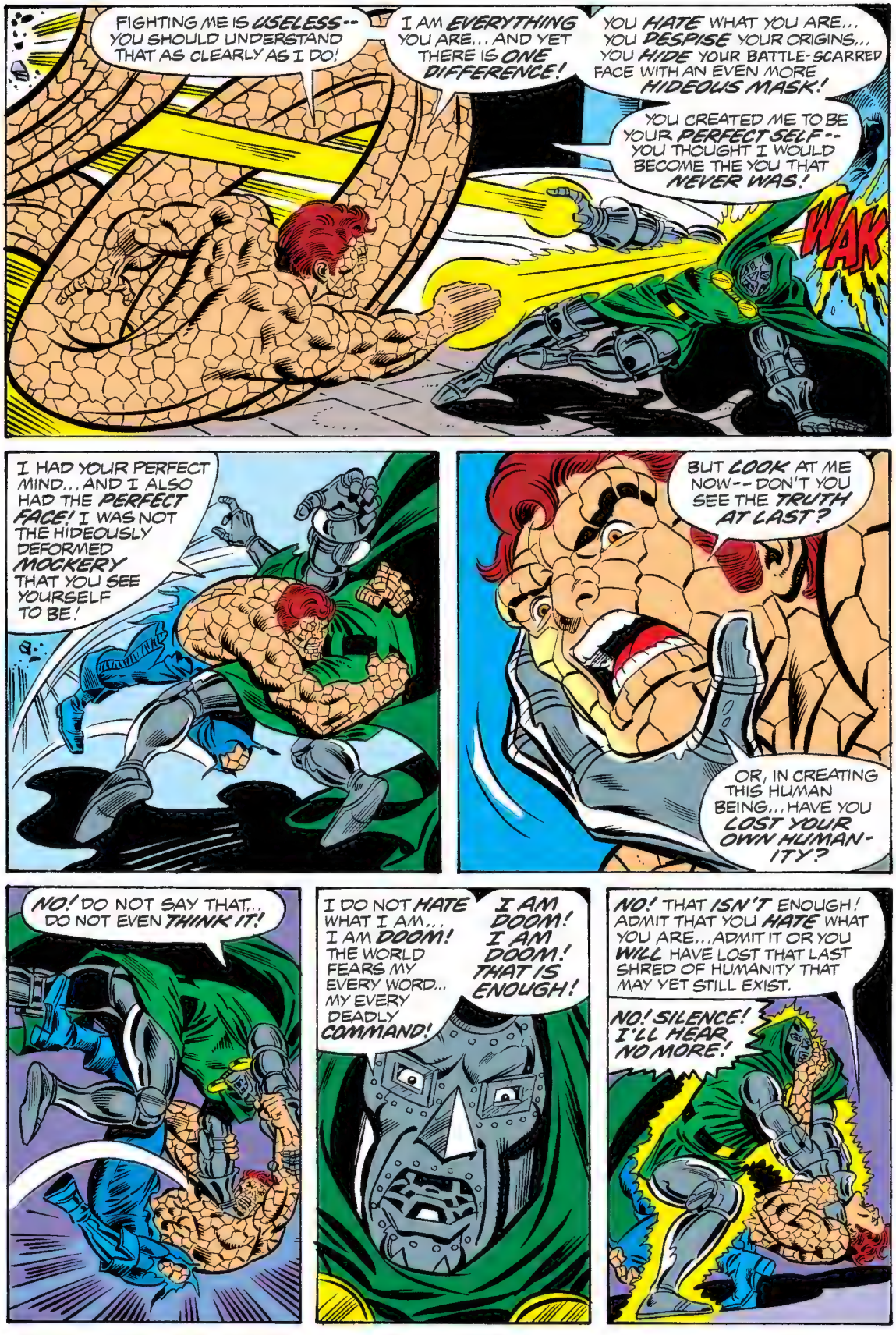
KISS MY LIPS--IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME AT LAST!

MEANWHILE...
STAND BACK, EVERYONE-- BEFORE THE CURIOUS EYES OF THE WORLD... BEFORE THE CAMERAS BELONGING TO THE UNITED NATIONS WHO ARE OBSERVING THIS FINE EVENT--
--I REMOVE THE CROWN WHICH WAS FREELY BESTOWED UPON ME BY A LOYAL AND GRACIOUS PEOPLE...
...AND PLACE IT UPON THE HEAD OF MY SON!
BUT, EVEN AS THE CROWN IS SET IN PLACE...
DOOM! TELL THE TRUTH FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE--
THAT MAN ISN'T YOUR SON--
--HE IS YOUR PERFECT CLONE!
WHAT? HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT YOU HAVE FREED YOURSELF?
OMNI-BOTS--SILENCE MY FOES! DESTROY THEM!
WE HEAR, MASTER! WE OBEY!
FLAME ON!
SKAM
ZWITT
FWUMMP
WE GOTTA SMASH OUR WAY THRU THESE WALKIN' ERECTOR SETS TA GET TA DOOM.


WHILE THE FANTASTIC FOUR BATTLE TO SAVE LATVERIA'S CITIZENRY, ITS FRIGHTENED POPULACE REACTS WITH FEAR...
RUN! WE'RE GOING TO BE DESTROYED!
BUT THE ROBOTS ARE FASTER THAN WE ARE... MORE POWERFUL THAN US ALL!
SO, THE CHARADE IS OVER--NOW IT IS YOUR TURN, MY CLONE. I HAVE TRANSFERED INTO YOU THE POWERS OF MY GREATEST ENEMIES.
B-BUT SOMETHING IS HAPPENING TO ME...
I FEEL TERRIBLE PAIN RIPPING THROUGH ME!
RICHARDS HAS SOMEHOW SHORT-CIRCUITED THE TRANSFERENCE GLOBES... HE MUST HAVE ALTERED HOW THEY AFFECTED ME!
L-LOOK! I'M GROWING... CHANGING... INTO SOMETHING THAT RESEMBLES THE THING HIMSELF!
REED, DOOM'S KID LOOKS JUST LIKE ME... ONLY NOT AS HANDSOME!
THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A POWER FEEDBACK... NOT KNOWING WHAT DOOM WAS UP TO, I COULDN'T ALLOW FOR EVERY CONTINGENCY!
BY THE UNSPEAKABLE DEMONS! YOUR FACE IS ALMOST AS HORRIBLE AS MY OWN! AND AFTER ALL THE PRECAUTIONS I'D TAKEN!
GO! YOU MUST DESTROY THE ABYSMAL CRETINS WHO HAVE DONE THIS TO YOU!
NO!

YOU RAISED ME IN SECRET FOR ALL THAT TIME--BUT YOU MADE A MOST DRASTIC MISTAKE!
THE POWERS HAVE DONE MORE THAN JUST STRENGTHEN ME.
AT LONG LAST, I SEE YOU... I SEE US--FOR WHAT WE TRULY ARE!
YOU DID THIS TO ME... YOU CREATED ME IN YOUR LABORATORY YEARS AGO--
SKOR!
AND THE TRUTH SICKENS ME, DOOM-- IT TRULY SICKENS ME!
WE MAY HAVE BEEN BORN FROM THE SAME CELL--BUT I AM YOU BEFORE THE ACCIDENT WHICH DROVE YOU MAD!
I DO NOT POSSESS YOUR OUTRAGE... YOUR HATE... OR YOUR INSANITY!
THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE! YOU ARE ME!
WHAT? A FORCE FIELD SURROUNDS YOU?
YES... ONE PERHAPS LESS POWERFUL THAN THE INVISIBLE GIRL'S-- BUT IT STANDS PROTECTIVE NONETHELESS.
I ALSO HAVE TO A LESSER DEGREE THE FLAMING POWERS OF THE HUMAN TORCH!
YOU TREAT ME LIKE AN ENEMY? AWAY THEN, FOOL! AWAY!
YOUR FORCE-SHIELDS... I HAD FORGOTTEN ABOUT THEM!


BUT, AS I POSSESS ALL YOUR KNOWLEDGE... ADDED TO THE POWERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR--
--YOU'LL SOON UNDERSTAND THAT YOU HAVE CREATED YOUR MOST DREADED FOE!
YOU CANNOT ATTACK ME! YOU ARE ME!
THAT IS THE REASON I MUST STOP YOU, DOOM--I KNOW HOW TRULY EVIL YOU ARE! YOU MUST BE DESTROYED!
WERE IT NOT FOR MY THERMAL UNITS--
--YOU MIGHT SUCCEED.
BUT DOOM IS NOT SO EASILY DEFEATED... ALL MY LIFE I HAVE FOUGHT FOR POWER. DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE I WILL EASILY RELINQUISH IT NOW?
NOT EVEN TO YOU WHO ARE ME!
I HAVE MY DESTINY--AND NO ONE SHALL STOP ME FROM CLAIMING IT!
THWAK!
JUST IN CASE YOU FEEL THE F.F. ARE SITTING OUT THIS BATTLE, TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT'S HAPPENING JUST AROUND THE CORNER...
HURRY, REED--I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN KEEP THESE ROBOTS BUSY!
DON'T YA WORRY YER LITTLE BLONDE HAIRS ABOUT THAT, GAL--
UNCA BENJY AIN'T ABOUT TA LET HIS FAVORITE FIGHTIN' FEMALE HOG ALL THE GLORY AN' ACTION!
WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT DOOM?
IT'S INCREDIBLE! IT'S AS IF THE TWO SIDES OF DOOM'S PSYCHE ARE STRUGGLING TO SEE WHICH GAINS CONTROL.


FIGHTING ME IS USELESS-- YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT AS CLEARLY AS I DO!
I AM EVERYTHING YOU ARE... AND YET THERE IS ONE DIFFERENCE!
YOU HATE WHAT YOU ARE... YOU DESPISE YOUR ORIGINS... YOU HIDE YOUR BATTLE-SCARRED FACE WITH AN EVEN MORE HIDEOUS MASK!
YOU CREATED ME TO BE YOUR PERFECT SELF-- YOU THOUGHT I WOULD BECOME THE YOU THAT NEVER WAS!
WAK
I HAD YOUR PERFECT MIND... AND I ALSO HAD THE PERFECT FACE! I WAS NOT THE HIDEOUSLY DEFORMED MOCKERY THAT YOU SEE YOURSELF TO BE!
BUT LOOK AT ME NOW-- DON'T YOU SEE THE TRUTH AT LAST?
OR, IN CREATING THIS HUMAN BEING... HAVE YOU LOST YOUR OWN HUMANITY?
NO! DO NOT SAY THAT... DO NOT EVEN THINK IT!
I DO NOT HATE WHAT I AM... I AM DOOM! THE WORLD FEARS MY EVERY WORD... MY EVERY DEADLY COMMAND!
I AM DOOM! I AM DOOM! THAT IS ENOUGH!
NO! THAT ISN'T ENOUGH! ADMIT THAT YOU HATE WHAT YOU ARE... ADMIT IT OR YOU WILL HAVE LOST THAT LAST SHRED OF HUMANITY THAT MAY YET STILL EXIST.
NO! SILENCE! I'LL HEAR NO MORE!

I CANNOT BEAR TO LISTEN TO YOU SPEAK YOUR BLASPHEMOUS LIES!
I MUST SILENCE YOU FOREVER!
THE ELECTRO-MAGNETIC AMPLIFIER WITHIN MY ARMOR WILL SHATTER YOU!
IT IS NO USE! IN DESTROYING ME... YOU'VE ONLY SUCCEEDED IN DOOMING YOURSELF!
AAARHHH!
GOOD LORD, HE'S DEAD!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
I-IT'S HORRIBLE!
WHY--WHY DID YOU MAKE ME KILL YOU? WHY DID YOU TORMENT ME WHY? WHY? WHY?
NEXT: OUR 200TH ISSUE--17TH ANNIVERSARY SPECTACULAR!
POSSIBLY THE MOST IMPORTANT STORY IN THE MARVEL AGE OF COMICS!
NEXT MONTH--A DOUBLE-SIZE CHILLER... AND A MAGAZINE WE PROMISE YOU WILL NEVER FORGET: REED RICHARDS ALONE AGAINST THE FURY OF... DOCTOR DOOM!

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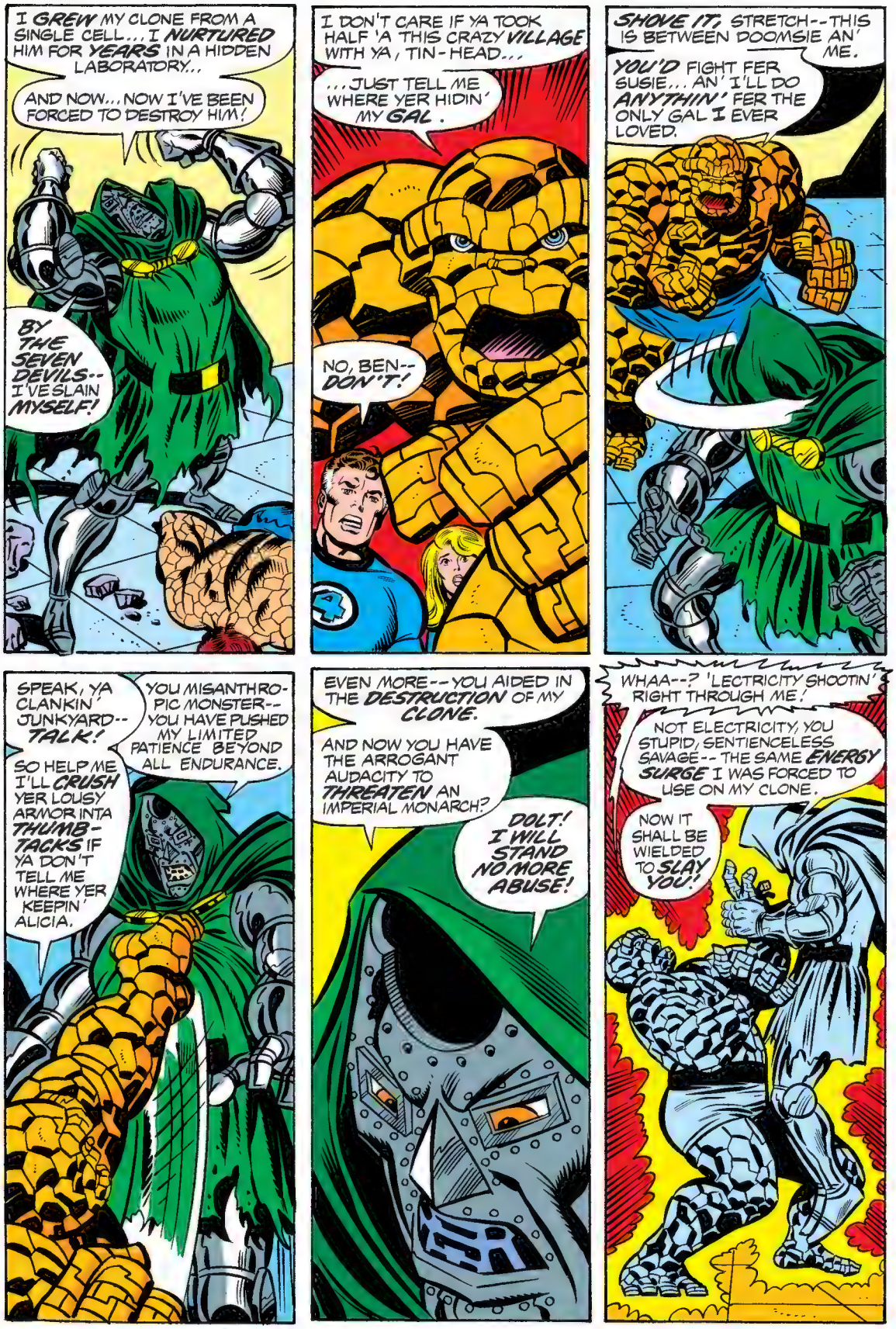
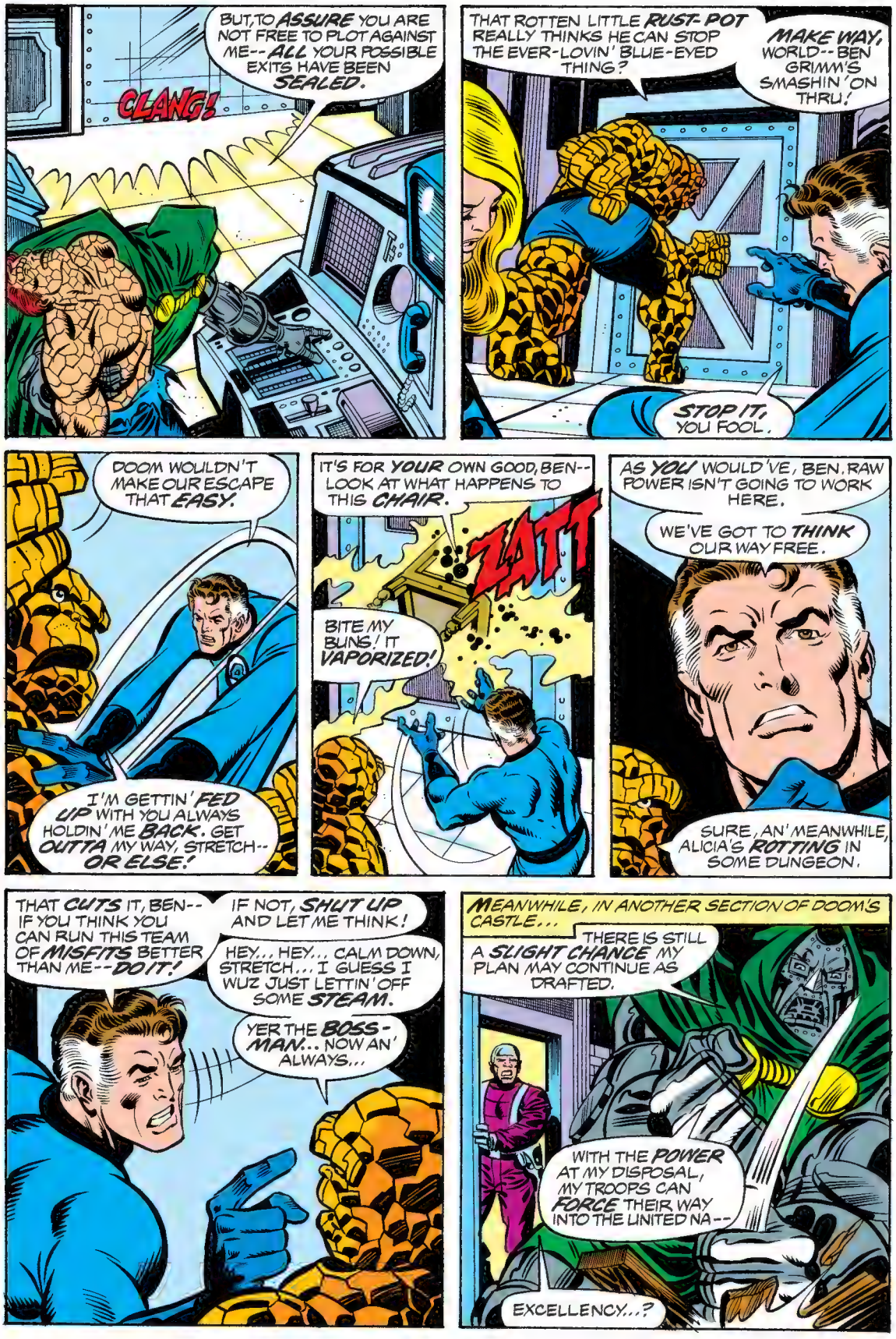
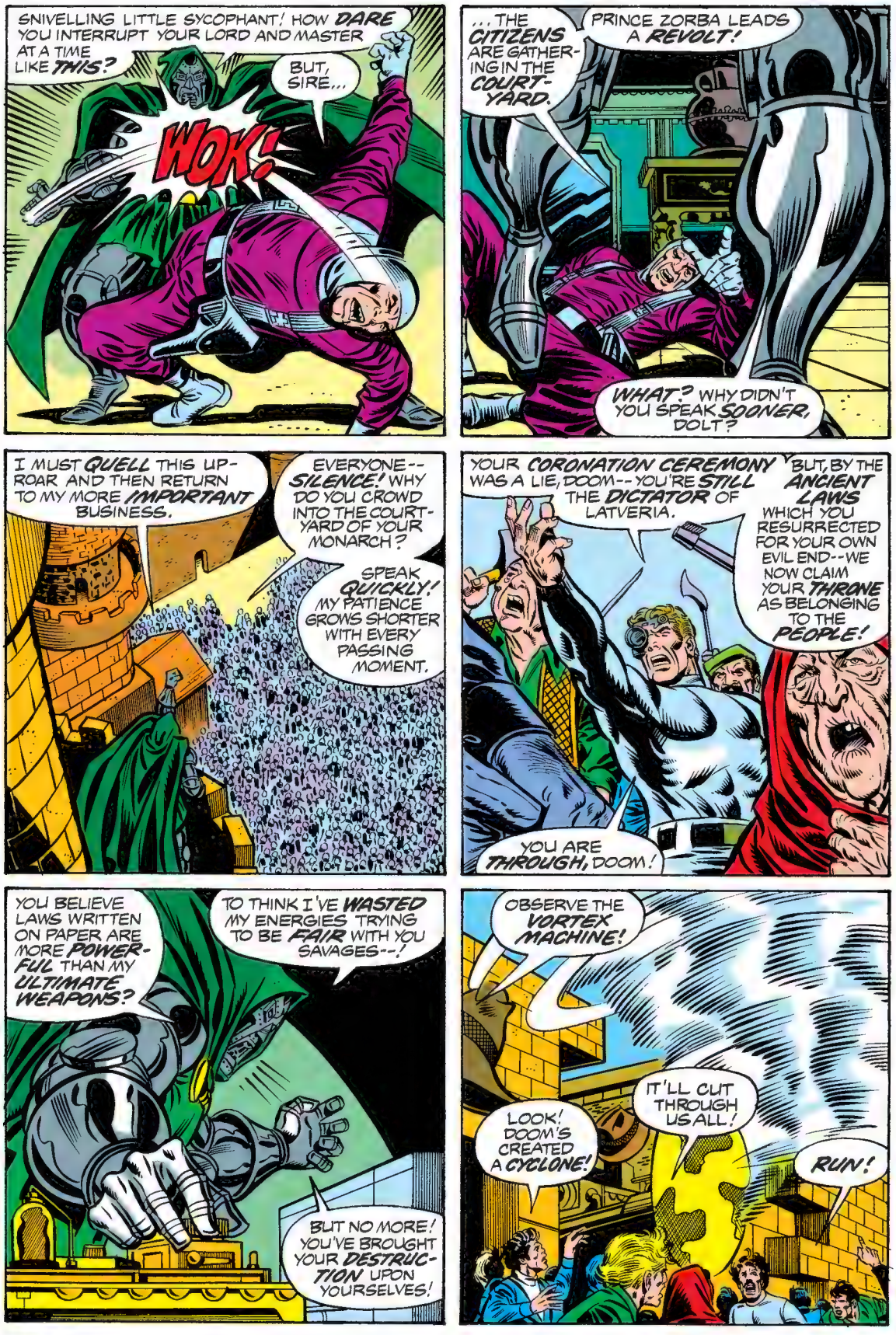
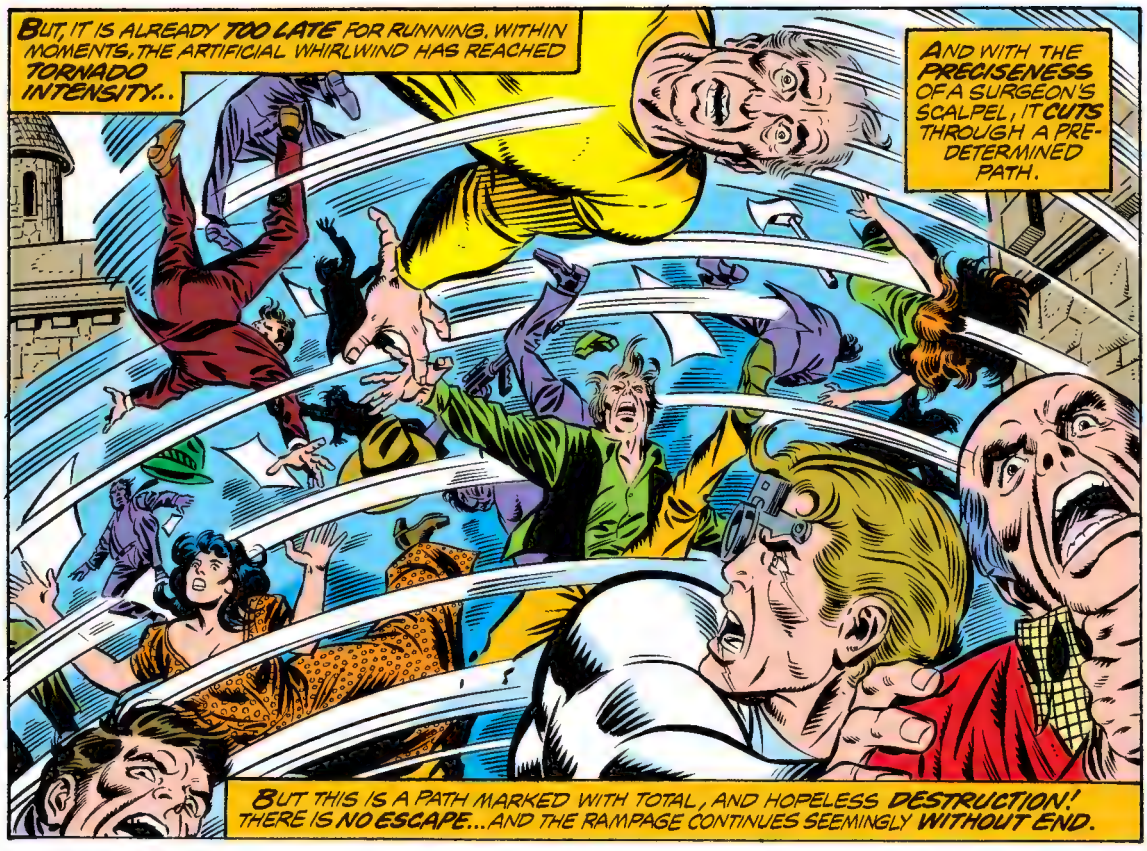
THIS IS IT! OUR 200TH ISSUE--17TH ANNIVERSARY SPECTACULAR!
THE CONCLUSION OF THE GREATEST F.F. SAGA OF ALL!
WHEN TITANS CLASH!
WHY WAS I FORCED TO SLAY MY OWN CLONE?
WHY AM I CHEATED OUT OF THE VICTORY THAT SHOULD RIGHTFULLY BE MINE?
WHY? WHY? WHY?
STAND BACK, EVERYONE--THIS IS THE WRONG MOMENT TO PRESS OUR ATTACK!
DEDICATED TO STAN LEE & JACK KIRBY--WITHOUT WHOM THIS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE!
1962

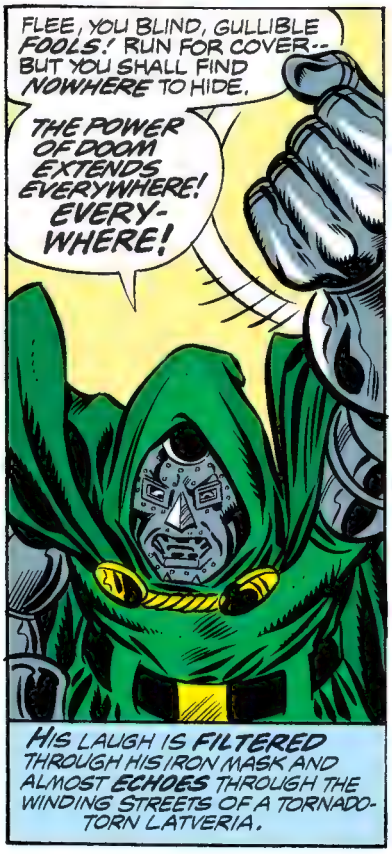

I GREW MY CLONE FROM A SINGLE CELL... I NURTURED HIM FOR YEARS IN A HIDDEN LABORATORY...
AND NOW... NOW I'VE BEEN FORCED TO DESTROY HIM!
BY THE SEVEN DEVILS-- I'VE SLAIN MYSELF!
I DON'T CARE IF YA TOOK HALF 'A THIS CRAZY VILLAGE WITH YA, TIN-HEAD...
...JUST TELL ME WHERE YER HIDIN' MY GAL.
NO, BEN-- DON'T!
SHOVE IT, STRETCH--THIS IS BETWEEN DOOMSIE AN' ME.
YOU'D FIGHT FER SUSIE... AN' I'LL DO ANYTHIN' FER THE ONLY GAL I EVER LOVED.
SPEAK, YA CLANKIN' JUNKYARD-- TALK!
SO HELP ME I'LL CRUSH YER LOUSY ARMOR INTA THUMB-TACKS IF YA DON'T TELL ME WHERE YER KEEPIN' ALICIA.
YOU MISANTHROPIC MONSTER-- YOU HAVE PUSHED MY LIMITED PATIENCE BEYOND ALL ENDURANCE.
EVEN MORE-- YOU AIDED IN THE DESTRUCTION OF MY CLONE.
AND NOW YOU HAVE THE ARROGANT AUDACITY TO THREATEN AN IMPERIAL MONARCH?
DOLT! I WILL STAND NO MORE ABUSE!
WHAA--? 'LECTRICITY SHOOTIN' RIGHT THROUGH ME!
NOT ELECTRICITY, YOU STUPID, SENTIENCELESS SAVAGE-- THE SAME ENERGY SURGE I WAS FORCED TO USE ON MY CLONE.
NOW IT SHALL BE WIELDED TO SLAY YOU!

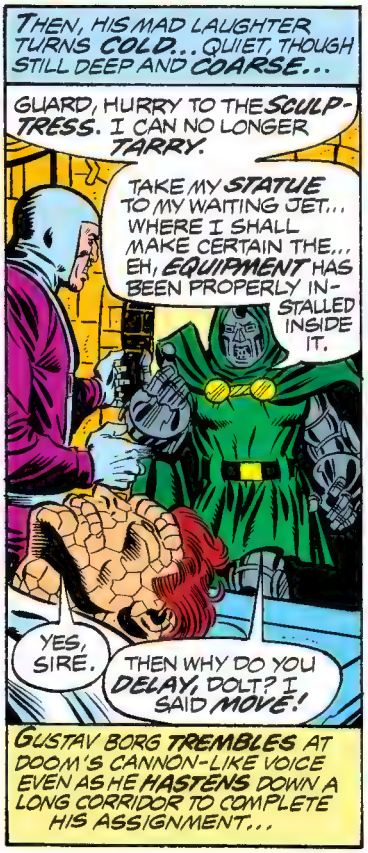
REED! WE CAN'T LET DOOM KILL HIM!
I KNOW THAT, JOHNNY-- LET'S MOVE!
HE'S CREATED HIS OWN FORCE SHIELD... I CAN'T GET TO BEN!
THE MONSTROUS MISFIT SHALL DIE... THEN, YOU THREE SHALL FOLLOW!
THIS TIME, DOCTOR DOOM HAS LEFT NOTHING TO CHANCE.
THIS TIME, ONLY DOOM SHALL SURVIVE!
ENERGY RADIATING FROM HIS ARMOR...
IT'S EVEN MORE POWERFUL THAN MY FORCE FIELD.
BLAZES! IT'S PUSHING ME BACK INTO THE WALL!
REED--? DO SOMETHING-- WE'RE BEING CRUSHED!
WAIT... THE PRESSURE IS LETTING OFF... AND DOOM'S LEAVING.
NOT LEAVING, RICHARDS... POSTPONING YOUR ULTIMATE DEMISE.
I SHALL RETURN AFTER I'VE TAKEN CARE OF MY CLONE'S BODY.
THEN, YOU SHALL ALL SUFFER AN ALMOST UNIMAGINABLE FATE!

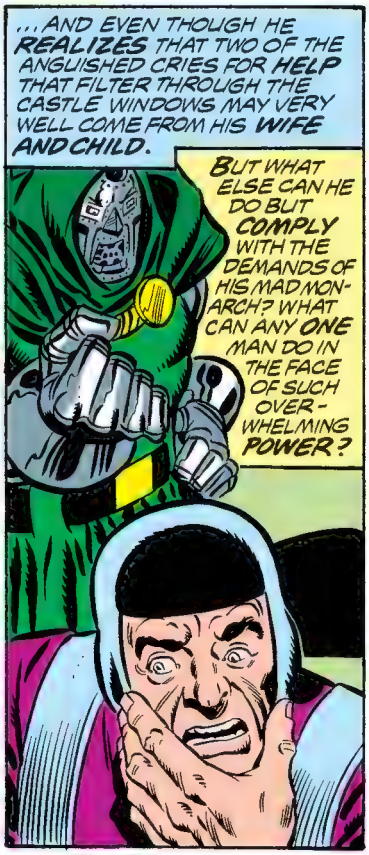

BUT, TO ASSURE YOU ARE NOT FREE TO PLOT AGAINST ME-- ALL YOUR POSSIBLE EXITS HAVE BEEN SEALED.
CLANG!
THAT ROTTEN LITTLE RUST-POT REALLY THINKS HE CAN STOP THE EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED THING?
MAKE WAY, WORLD-- BEN GRIMM'S SMASHIN' ON THRU!
STOP IT, YOU FOOL.
DOOM WOULDN'T MAKE OUR ESCAPE THAT EASY.
I'M GETTIN' FED UP WITH YOU ALWAYS HOLDIN' ME BACK. GET OUTTA MY WAY, STRETCH-- OR ELSE!
IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, BEN-- LOOK AT WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS CHAIR.
ZATT
BITE MY BUNS! IT VAPORIZED!
AS YOU WOULD'VE, BEN, RAW POWER ISN'T GOING TO WORK HERE.
WE'VE GOT TO THINK OUR WAY FREE.
SURE, AN' MEANWHILE, ALICIA'S ROTTING IN SOME DUNGEON.
THAT CUTS IT, BEN-- IF YOU THINK YOU CAN RUN THIS TEAM OF MISFITS BETTER THAN ME--DO IT!
IF NOT, SHUT UP AND LET ME THINK!
HEY... HEY... CALM DOWN, STRETCH... I GUESS I WUZ JUST LETTIN' OFF SOME STEAM.
YER THE BOSS-MAN... NOW AN' ALWAYS...
MEANWHILE, IN ANOTHER SECTION OF DOOM'S CASTLE...
THERE IS STILL A SLIGHT CHANCE MY PLAN MAY CONTINUE AS DRAFTED.
WITH THE POWER AT MY DISPOSAL, MY TROOPS CAN FORCE THEIR WAY INTO THE UNITED NA--
EXCELLENCY...?

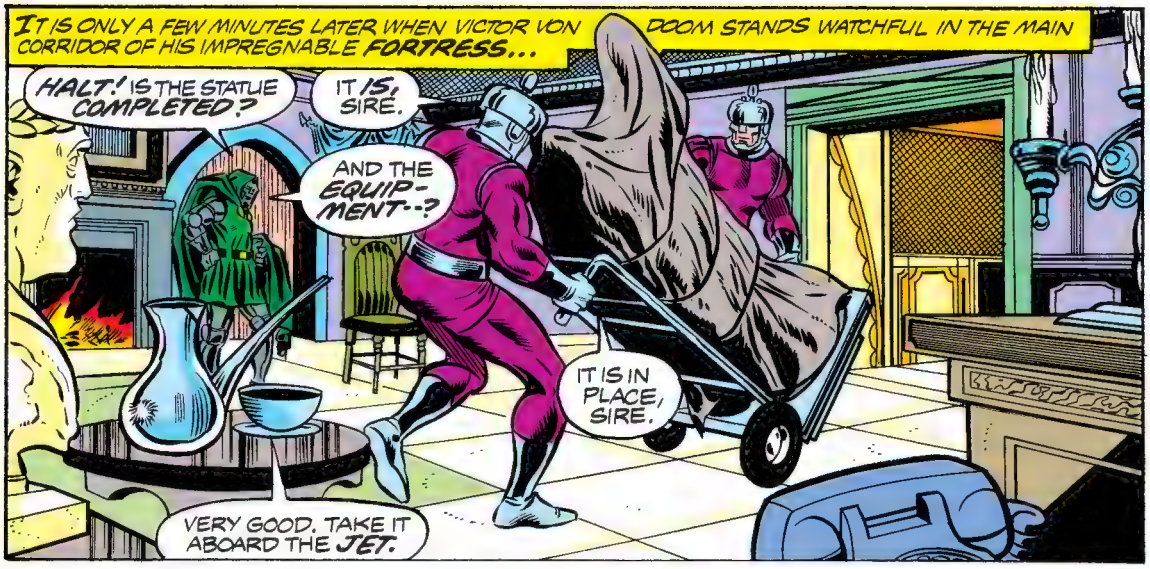

SNIVELLING LITTLE SYCOPHANT! HOW DARE YOU INTERRUPT YOUR LORD AND MASTER AT A TIME LIKE THIS?
BUT, SIRE...
WOK!
...THE CITIZENS ARE GATHERING IN THE COURTYARD.
PRINCE ZORBA LEADS A REVOLT!
WHAT? WHY DIDN'T YOU SPEAK SOONER, DOLT?
I MUST QUELL THIS UPROAR AND THEN RETURN TO MY MORE IMPORTANT BUSINESS.
EVERYONE--SILENCE! WHY DO YOU CROWD INTO THE COURTYARD OF YOUR MONARCH?
SPEAK QUICKLY! MY PATIENCE GROWS SHORTER WITH EVERY PASSING MOMENT.
YOUR CORONATION CEREMONY WAS A LIE, DOOM--YOU'RE STILL THE DICTATOR OF LATVERIA.
BUT, BY THE ANCIENT LAWS WHICH YOU RESURRECTED FOR YOUR OWN EVIL END--WE NOW CLAIM YOUR THRONE AS BELONGING TO THE PEOPLE!
YOU ARE THROUGH, DOOM!
YOU BELIEVE LAWS WRITTEN ON PAPER ARE MORE POWERFUL THAN MY ULTIMATE WEAPONS?
TO THINK I'VE WASTED MY ENERGIES TRYING TO BE FAIR WITH YOU SAVAGES--!
BUT NO MORE! YOU'VE BROUGHT YOUR DESTRUCTION UPON YOURSELVES!
OBSERVE THE VORTEX MACHINE!
LOOK! DOOM'S CREATED A CYCLONE!
IT'LL CUT THROUGH US ALL!
RUN!

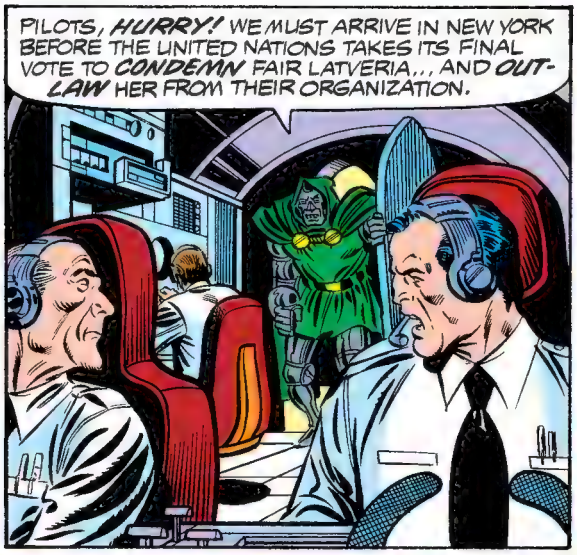

BUT, IT IS ALREADY TOO LATE FOR RUNNING. WITHIN MOMENTS, THE ARTIFICIAL WHIRLWIND HAS REACHED TORNADO INTENSITY..
AND WITH THE PRECISENESS OF A SURGEON'S SCALPEL, IT CUTS THROUGH A PRE-DETERMINED PATH.
BUT THIS IS A PATH MARKED WITH TOTAL, AND HOPELESS DESTRUCTION! THERE IS NO ESCAPE...AND THE RAMPAGE CONTINUES SEEMINGLY WITHOUT END.

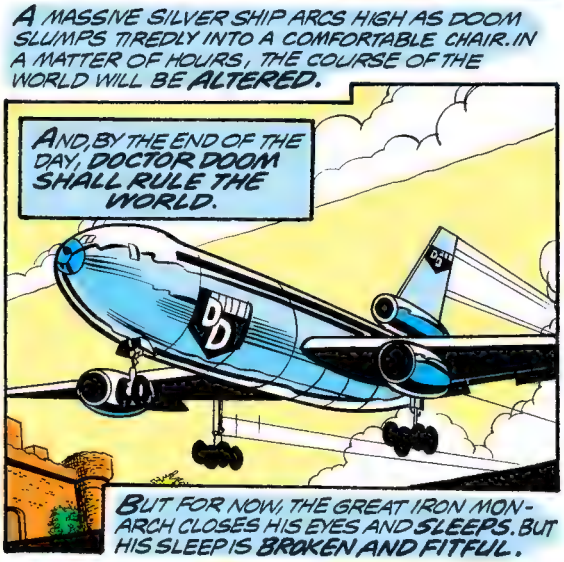

FLEE, YOU BLIND, GULLIBLE FOOLS! RUN FOR COVER-- BUT YOU SHALL FIND NOWHERE TO HIDE.
THE POWER OF DOOM EXTENDS EVERYWHERE! EVERY-WHERE!
HIS LAUGH IS FILTERED THROUGH HIS IRON MASK AND ALMOST ECHOES THROUGH THE WINDING STREETS OF A TORNADO-TORN LATVERIA.

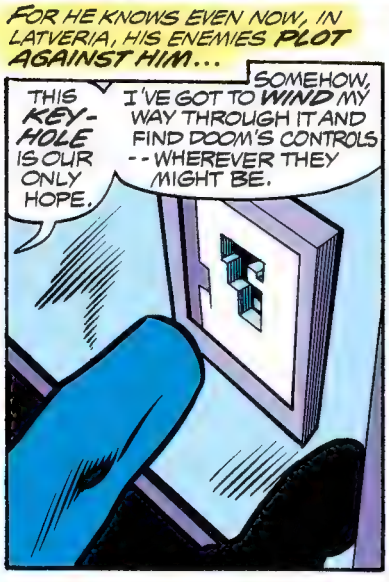

THEN, HIS MAD LAUGHTER TURNS COLD... QUIET, THOUGH STILL DEEP AND COARSE...
GUARD, HURRY TO THE SCULPTRESS. I CAN NO LONGER TARRY.
TAKE MY STATUE TO MY WAITING JET... WHERE I SHALL MAKE CERTAIN THE... EH, EQUIPMENT HAS BEEN PROPERLY INSTALLED INSIDE IT.
YES, SIRE.
THEN WHY DO YOU DELAY, DOLT? I SAID MOVE!
GUSTAV BORG TREMBLES AT DOOM'S CANNON-LIKE VOICE EVEN AS HE HASTENS DOWN A LONG CORRIDOR TO COMPLETE HIS ASSIGNMENT...


...AND EVEN THOUGH HE REALIZES THAT TWO OF THE ANGUISHED CRIES FOR HELP THAT FILTER THROUGH THE CASTLE WINDOWS MAY VERY WELL COME FROM HIS WIFE AND CHILD.
BUT WHAT ELSE CAN HE DO BUT COMPLY WITH THE DEMANDS OF HIS MAD MONARCH? WHAT CAN ANY ONE MAN DO IN THE FACE OF SUCH OVERWHELMING POWER?

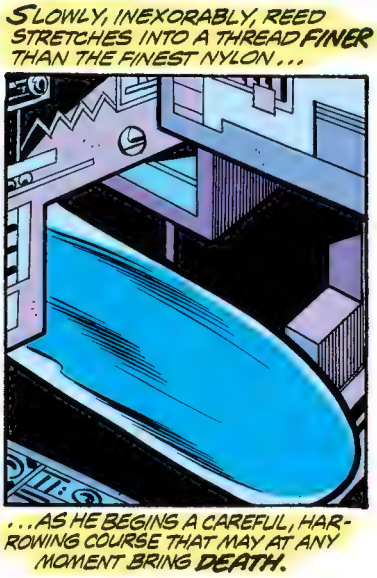

IT IS ONLY A FEW MINUTES LATER WHEN VICTOR VON DOOM STANDS WATCHFUL IN THE MAIN CORRIDOR OF HIS IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS...
HALT! IS THE STATUE COMPLETED?
IT IS, SIRE.
AND THE EQUIPMENT--?
IT IS IN PLACE, SIRE.
VERY GOOD. TAKE IT ABOARD THE JET.


PILOTS, HURRY! WE MUST ARRIVE IN NEW YORK BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS TAKES ITS FINAL VOTE TO CONDEMN FAIR LATVERIA... AND OUTLAW HER FROM THEIR ORGANIZATION.

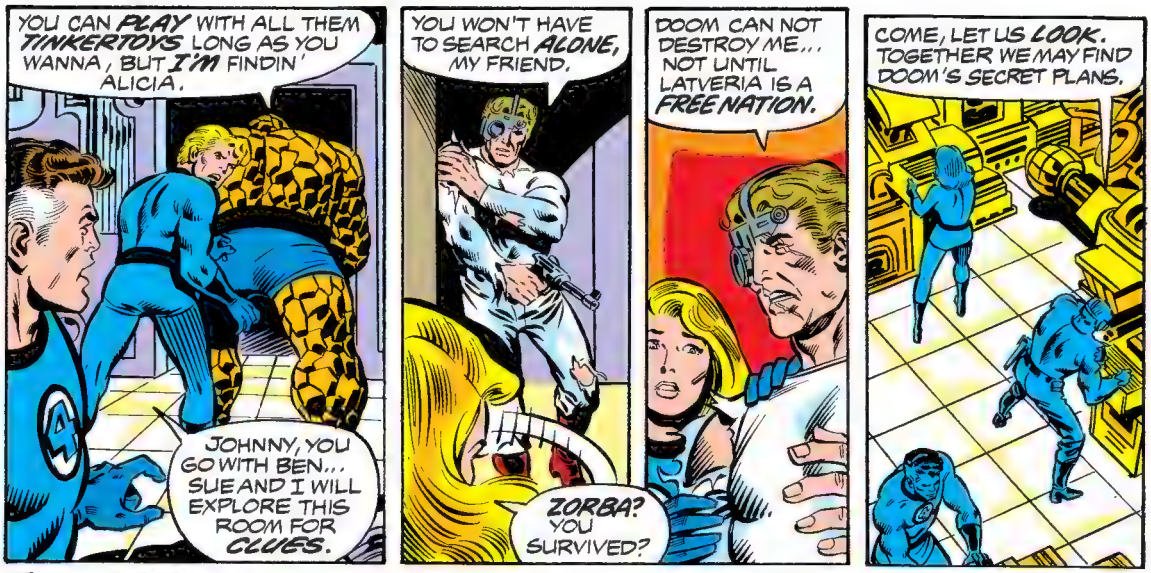

A MASSIVE SILVER SHIP ARCS HIGH AS DOOM SLUMPS TIREDLY INTO A COMFORTABLE CHAIR. IN A MATTER OF HOURS, THE COURSE OF THE WORLD WILL BE ALTERED.
AND, BY THE END OF THE DAY, DOCTOR DOOM SHALL RULE THE WORLD.
BUT FOR NOW, THE GREAT IRON MONARCH CLOSES HIS EYES AND SLEEPS. BUT HIS SLEEP IS BROKEN AND FITFUL.


FOR HE KNOWS EVEN NOW, IN LATVERIA, HIS ENEMIES PLOT AGAINST HIM...
THIS KEY-HOLE IS OUR ONLY HOPE.
SOMEHOW, I'VE GOT TO WIND MY WAY THROUGH IT AND FIND DOOM'S CONTROLS -- WHEREVER THEY MIGHT BE.

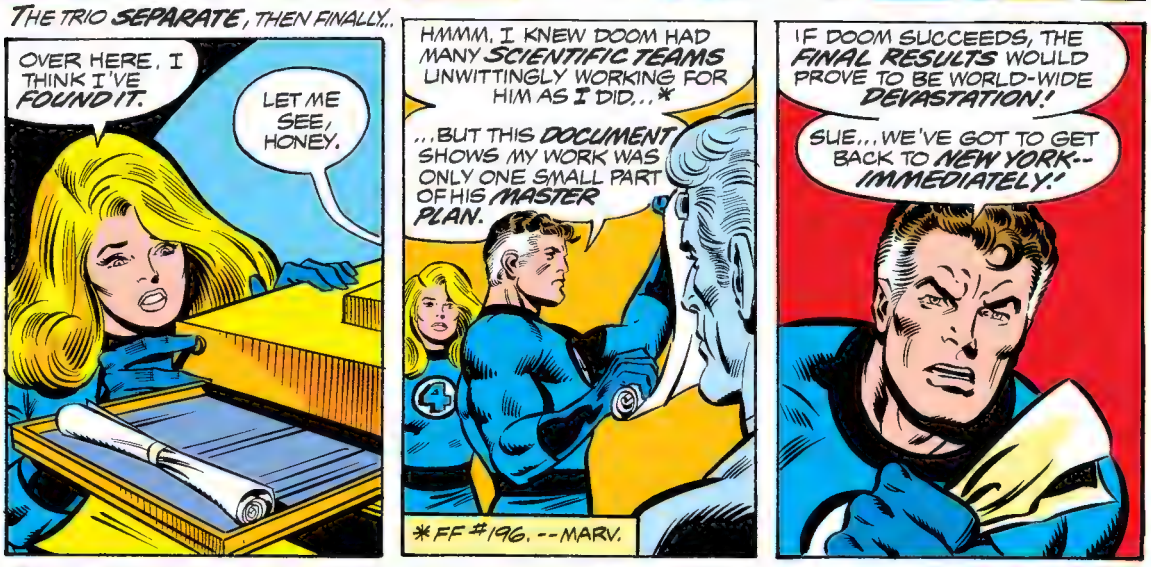
BUT IF YA TOUCH ANYTHIN', YOU'LL BE FRIED CRISPER'N THE COLONEL'S CHICKEN.
I HAVE TO TAKE THAT RISK, BEN-- THERE'S NO OTHER WAY!


SLOWLY, INEXORABLY, REED STRETCHES INTO A THREAD FINER THAN THE FINEST NYLON...
...AS HE BEGINS A CAREFUL, HARROWING COURSE THAT MAY AT ANY MOMENT BRING DEATH.

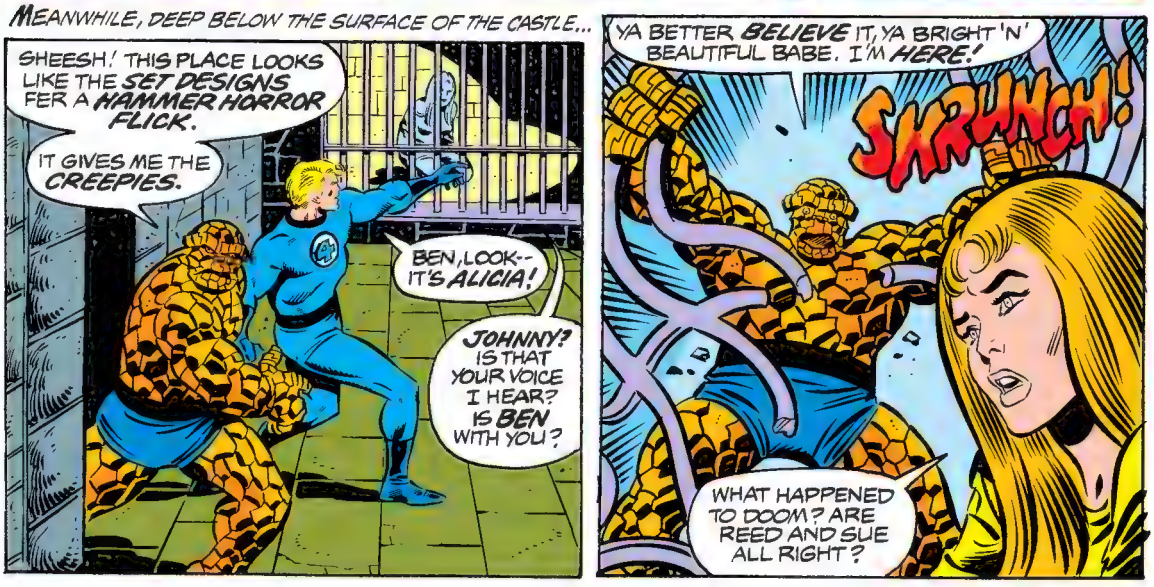
WITH IMPOSSIBLE PRECISION, HE WENDS A DELICATE PATH THROUGH THE COMPUTER-LOCKING MECHANISM...
BUT THEN, DESPITE EVERY PRECAUTION-- HE BRUSHES AGAINST A FILIMENT NO WIDER THAN ONE-MILLIONTH OF AN INCH.
AGGHHHH!
BUT THAT IS MORE THAN WIDE ENOUGH--
REED? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
DARLING-- PLEASE, SPEAK TO ME!
CRIPES! WHA'HOPPEN?
SUE... MY SIDES ARE BURNING... IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO CONCENTRATE, BUT I HAVE TO.
TOO MUCH DEPENDS ON MY GETTING THROUGH TO--WAIT!
THAT COMPUTER CONSOLE... I RECOGNIZE ITS FUNCTION. THIS SWITCH MUST SHUT OFF DOOM'S PROTECTIVE DEVICES.
KLIK!
A MOMENT LATER, A STEEL DOOR GRINDS UP INTO THE WALL, AND THEN...
REED, WHAT HAPPENED?
DON'T SCARE US LIKE THAT AGAIN, STRETCH. WE THOUGHT YOU WUZ A GONER!
LISTEN, THERE'S SOME SORT OF COMMOTION COMING FROM OUTSIDE.
COMMOTION MY UGLY ORANGE PUSS. IT'S A STORM!
IT CAN'T BE, BEN... FROM EVERYTHING WE'VE RESEARCHED OF LATVERIA... THERE'S NEVER BEEN A TORNADO HERE.
I BET DOLLARS TO DUNKIN' DONUTS DOC'S BEHIND THIS.
REED, DOOM'S GOT SOME KINDA TORNADO RIPPING THROUGH EVERYTHING.
I'M ALREADY AHEAD OF YOU, JOHNNY.
THIS BUTTON SHOULD END DOOM'S DESTRUCT WEAPON.


YOU CAN PLAY WITH ALL THEM TINKERTOYS LONG AS YOU WANNA, BUT I'M FINDIN' ALICIA.
JOHNNY, YOU GO WITH BEN... SUE AND I WILL EXPLORE THIS ROOM FOR CLUES.
YOU WON'T HAVE TO SEARCH ALONE, MY FRIEND.
ZORBA? YOU SURVIVED?
DOOM CAN NOT DESTROY ME... NOT UNTIL LATVERIA IS A FREE NATION.
COME, LET US LOOK. TOGETHER WE MAY FIND DOOM'S SECRET PLANS.

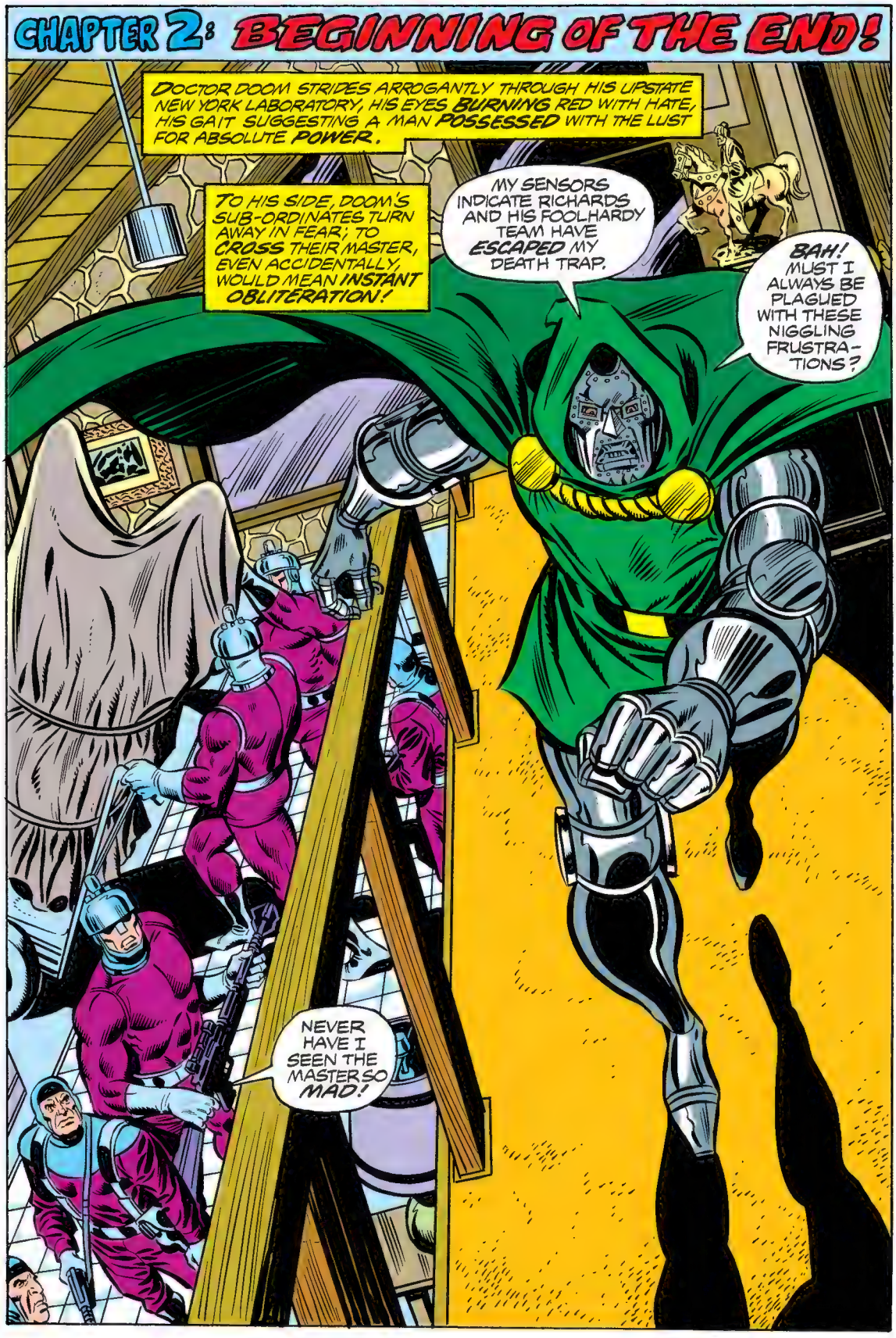
THE TRIO SEPARATE, THEN FINALLY...

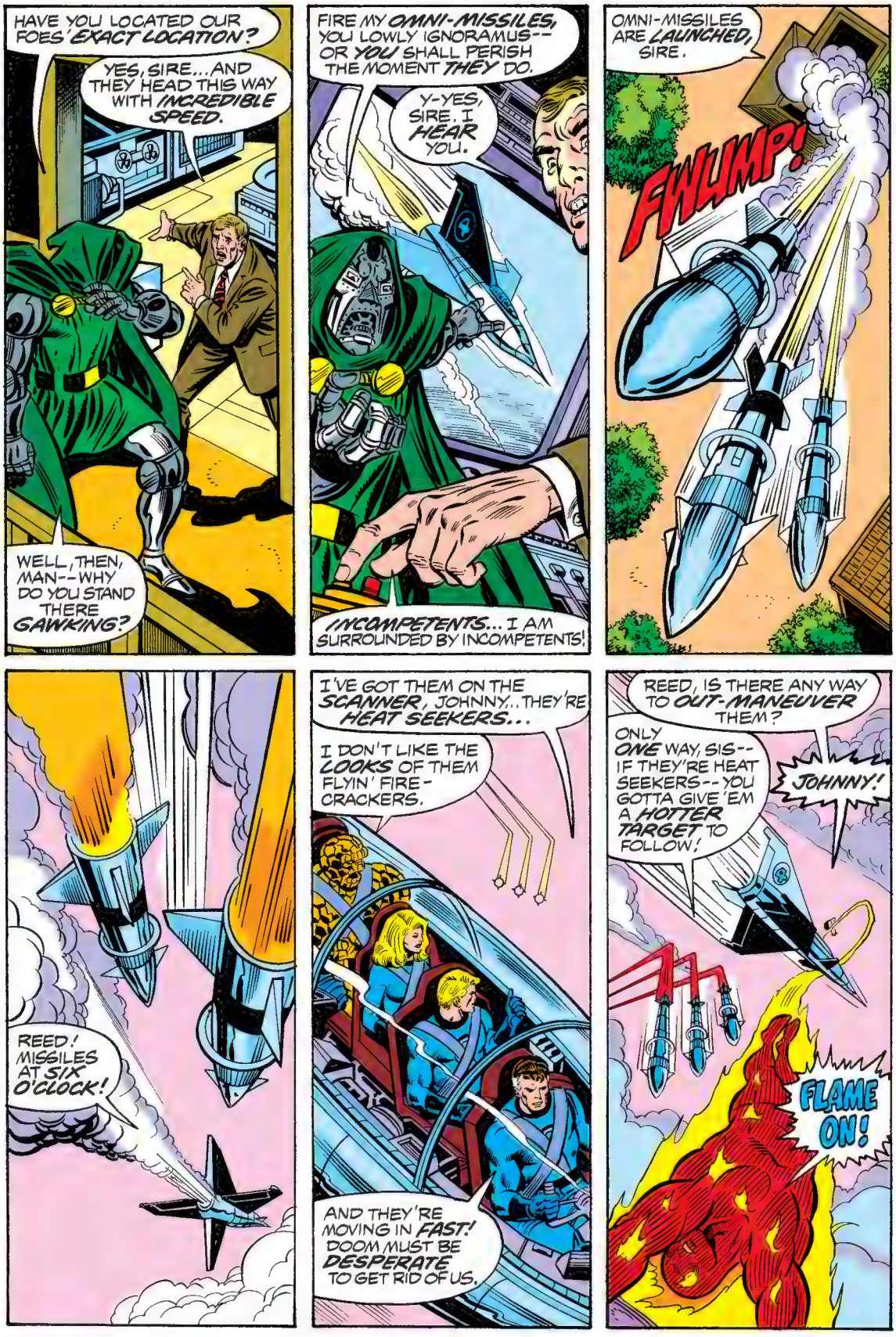

OVER HERE, I THINK I'VE FOUND IT.
LET ME SEE, HONEY.
HMMM, I KNEW DOOM HAD MANY SCIENTIFIC TEAMS UNWITTINGLY WORKING FOR HIM AS I DID...*
...BUT THIS DOCUMENT SHOWS MY WORK WAS ONLY ONE SMALL PART OF HIS MASTER PLAN.
*FF #196. --MARV.
IF DOOM SUCCEEDS, THE FINAL RESULTS WOULD PROVE TO BE WORLD-WIDE DEVASTATION!
SUE... WE'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO NEW YORK-- IMMEDIATELY!

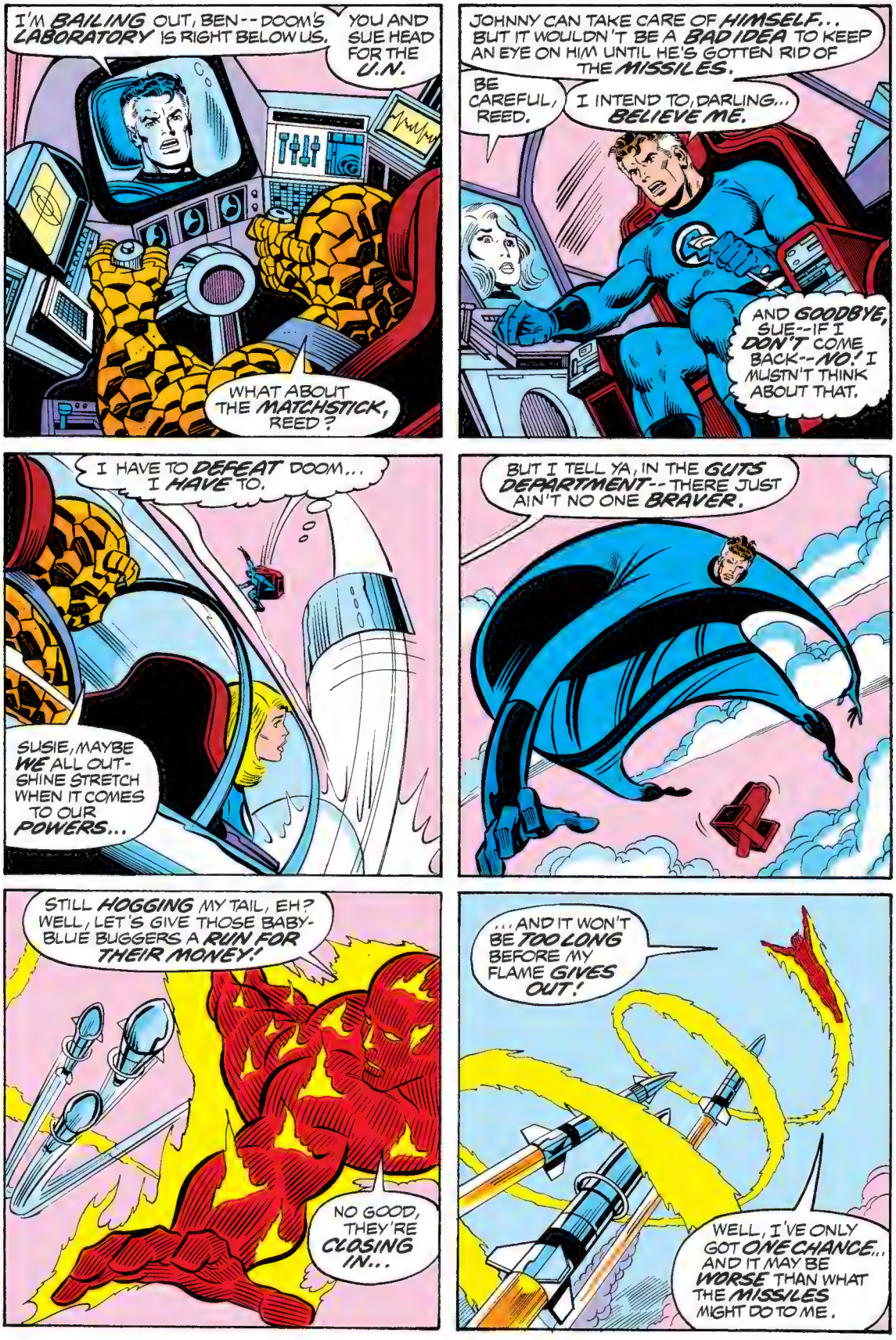
MEANWHILE, DEEP BELOW THE SURFACE OF THE CASTLE...

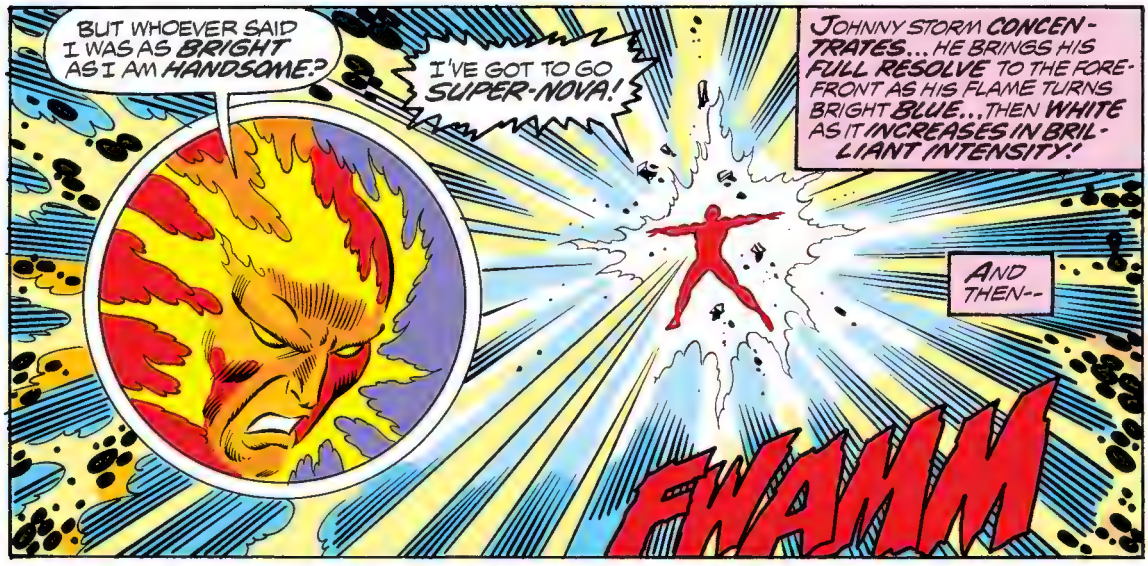

SHEESH! THIS PLACE LOOKS LIKE THE SET DESIGNS FER A HAMMER HORROR FLICK.
IT GIVES ME THE CREEPIES.
BEN, LOOK-- IT'S ALICIA!
JOHNNY? IS THAT YOUR VOICE I HEAR? IS BEN WITH YOU?
YA BETTER BELIEVE IT, YA BRIGHT 'N' BEAUTIFUL BABE. I'M HERE!
SKRUNCH!
WHAT HAPPENED TO DOOM? ARE REED AND SUE ALL RIGHT?

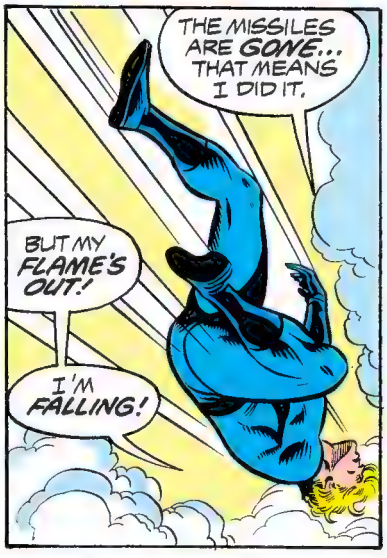
TIN-HEAD LAMBASTED OUTTA HERE... AN' STRETCH FREED US.
HEY, YER TREMBLIN'. C'MON, EVERYTHING'S GONNA BE OKAY NOW THAT YER IN POPPA BENJY'S ARMS.
BEN, WE HAVEN'T THE TIME FOR GET-TOGETHERS. WE'VE GOT TO MOVE!
YOU MOVE, HIGH-POCKETS. I'M GONNA WELCOME BACK MY BABY.
HEY, WOTTA YA STARIN' AT? YA NEVER SAW BEAUTY AN' THE BEAST?
BEN, WE HAVEN'T THE TIM--
JUST WAIT ONE SECOND THERE, HUSBAND-MINE. BEN'S ABSOLUTELY RIGHT! WE'VE BEEN SEPARATED NOW FOR WEEKS... I THOUGHT YOU HAD DIED...
...YOU'RE NOT GETTING OUT OF THIS DUNGEON WITHOUT GIVING ME A PROPER HELLO!
BUT, SUE-- THE WORLD--? THE UNITED NATIONS--?
FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE, REED RICHARDS-- SHUT UP!
I... I... OH WELL...
SOMETHING TELLS ME THERE ARE OTHER PRIORITIES THAT COME BEFORE THE FATE OF THE WORLD.
I GUESS THAT'S WHAT SEPARATES US FROM THE ANIMALS, ZORBA...
AND FRANKLY... THOSE ARE THE KINDA PRIORITIES THIS LITTLE MATCHSTICK JUST HASN'T BEEN GETTING ENOUGH OF LATELY.

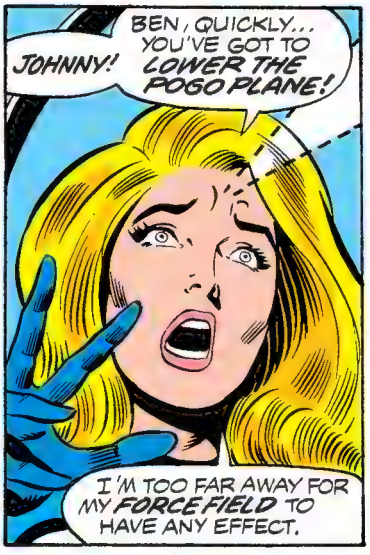

CHAPTER 2: BEGINNING OF THE END!
DOCTOR DOOM STRIDES ARROGANTLY THROUGH HIS UPSTATE NEW YORK LABORATORY, HIS EYES BURNING RED WITH HATE, HIS GAIT SUGGESTING A MAN POSSESSED WITH THE LUST FOR ABSOLUTE POWER.
TO HIS SIDE, DOOM'S SUB-ORDINATES TURN AWAY IN FEAR; TO CROSS THEIR MASTER, EVEN ACCIDENTALLY, WOULD MEAN INSTANT OBLITERATION!
MY SENSORS INDICATE RICHARDS AND HIS FOOLHARDY TEAM HAVE ESCAPED MY DEATH TRAP.
BAH! MUST I ALWAYS BE PLAGUED WITH THESE NIGGLING FRUSTRA-TIONS?
NEVER HAVE I SEEN THE MASTER SO MAD!

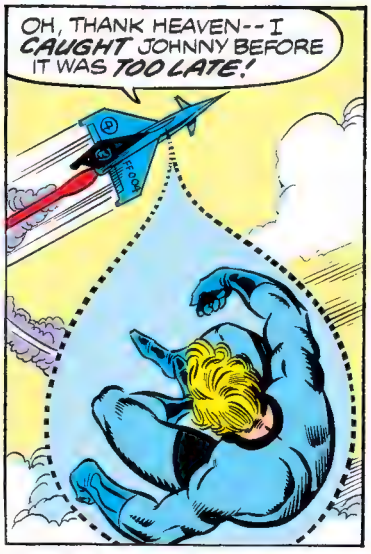

HAVE YOU LOCATED OUR FOES' EXACT LOCATION?
YES, SIRE... AND THEY HEAD THIS WAY WITH INCREDIBLE SPEED.
WELL, THEN, MAN--WHY DO YOU STAND THERE GAWKING?
FIRE MY OMNI-MISSILES, YOU LOWLY IGNORAMUS--OR YOU SHALL PERISH THE MOMENT THEY DO.
Y-YES, SIRE. I HEAR YOU.
INCOMPETENTS... I AM SURROUNDED BY INCOMPETENTS!
OMNI-MISSILES ARE LAUNCHED, SIRE.
FWUMP!
REED! MISSILES AT SIX O'CLOCK!
I'VE GOT THEM ON THE SCANNER, JOHNNY.. THEY'RE HEAT SEEKERS...
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THEM FLYIN' FIRE-CRACKERS.
AND THEY'RE MOVING IN FAST! DOOM MUST BE DESPERATE TO GET RID OF US.
REED, IS THERE ANY WAY TO OUT-MANEUVER THEM?
ONLY ONE WAY, SIS--IF THEY'RE HEAT SEEKERS--YOU GOTTA GIVE 'EM A HOTTER TARGET TO FOLLOW!
JOHNNY!
FLAME ON!

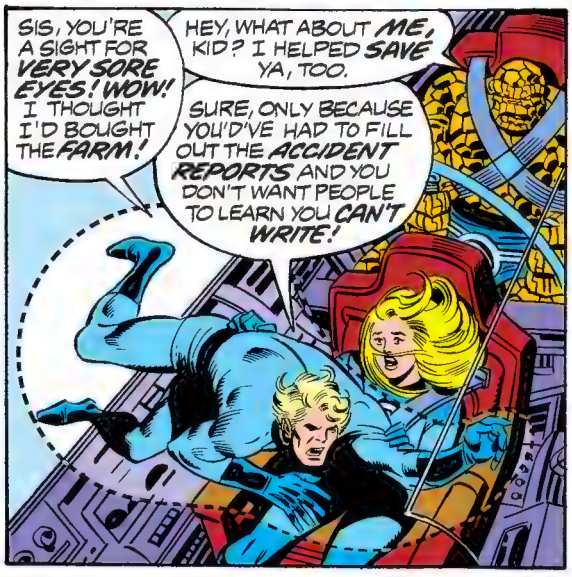

I'M BAILING OUT, BEN--DOOM'S LABORATORY IS RIGHT BELOW US.
YOU AND SUE HEAD FOR THE U.N.
WHAT ABOUT THE MATCHSTICK, REED?
JOHNNY CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF... BUT IT WOULDN'T BE A BAD IDEA TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIM UNTIL HE'S GOTTEN RID OF THE MISSILES.
BE CAREFUL, REED.
I INTEND TO, DARLING... BELIEVE ME.
AND GOODBYE, SUE--IF I DON'T COME BACK--NO! I MUSTN'T THINK ABOUT THAT.
I HAVE TO DEFEAT DOOM... I HAVE TO.
SUSIE, MAYBE WE ALL OUT-SHINE STRETCH WHEN IT COMES TO OUR POWERS...
BUT I TELL YA, IN THE GUTS DEPARTMENT--THERE JUST AIN'T NO ONE BRAVER.
STILL HOGGING MY TAIL, EH? WELL, LET'S GIVE THOSE BABY-BLUE BUGGERS A RUN FOR THEIR MONEY!
NO GOOD, THEY'RE CLOSING IN...
...AND IT WON'T BE TOO LONG BEFORE MY FLAME GIVES OUT!
WELL, I'VE ONLY GOT ONE CHANCE... AND IT MAY BE WORSE THAN WHAT THE MISSILES MIGHT DO TO ME.


BUT WHOEVER SAID I WAS AS BRIGHT AS I AM HANDSOME?
I'VE GOT TO GO SUPER-NOVA!
JOHNNY STORM CONCENTRATES... HE BRINGS HIS FULL RESOLVE TO THE FOREFRONT AS HIS FLAME TURNS BRIGHT BLUE... THEN WHITE AS IT INCREASES IN BRILLIANT INTENSITY!
AND THEN--
FWAMM


THE MISSILES ARE GONE... THAT MEANS I DID IT.
BUT MY FLAME'S OUT!
I'M FALLING!


JOHNNY!
BEN, QUICKLY... YOU'VE GOT TO LOWER THE POGO PLANE!
I'M TOO FAR AWAY FOR MY FORCE FIELD TO HAVE ANY EFFECT.


OH, THANK HEAVEN-- I CAUGHT JOHNNY BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE!

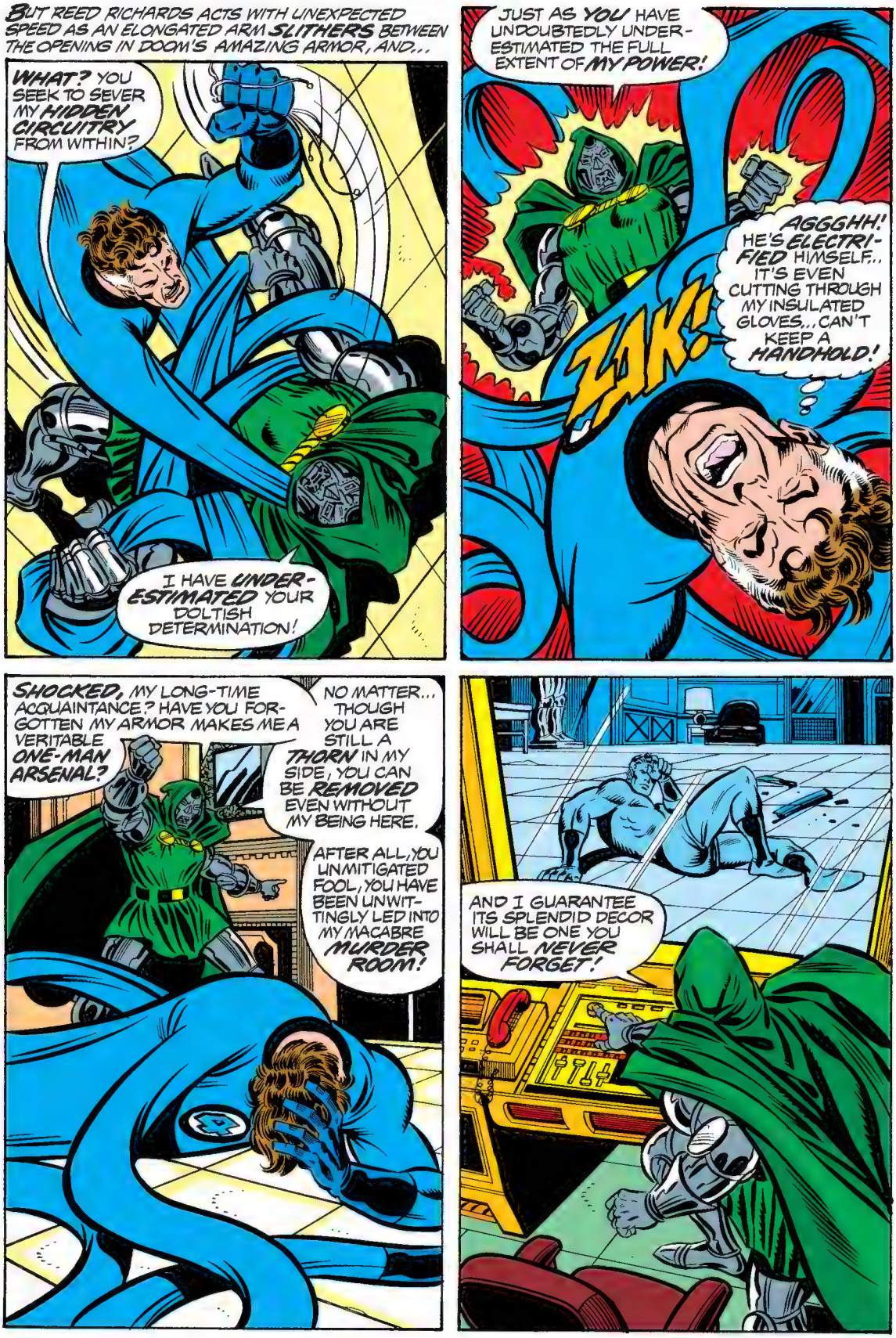

SIS, YOU'RE A SIGHT FOR VERY SORE EYES! WOW! I THOUGHT I'D BOUGHT THE FARM!
HEY, WHAT ABOUT ME, KID? I HELPED SAVE YA, TOO.
SURE, ONLY BECAUSE YOU'D'VE HAD TO FILL OUT THE ACCIDENT REPORTS AND YOU DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO LEARN YOU CAN'T WRITE!

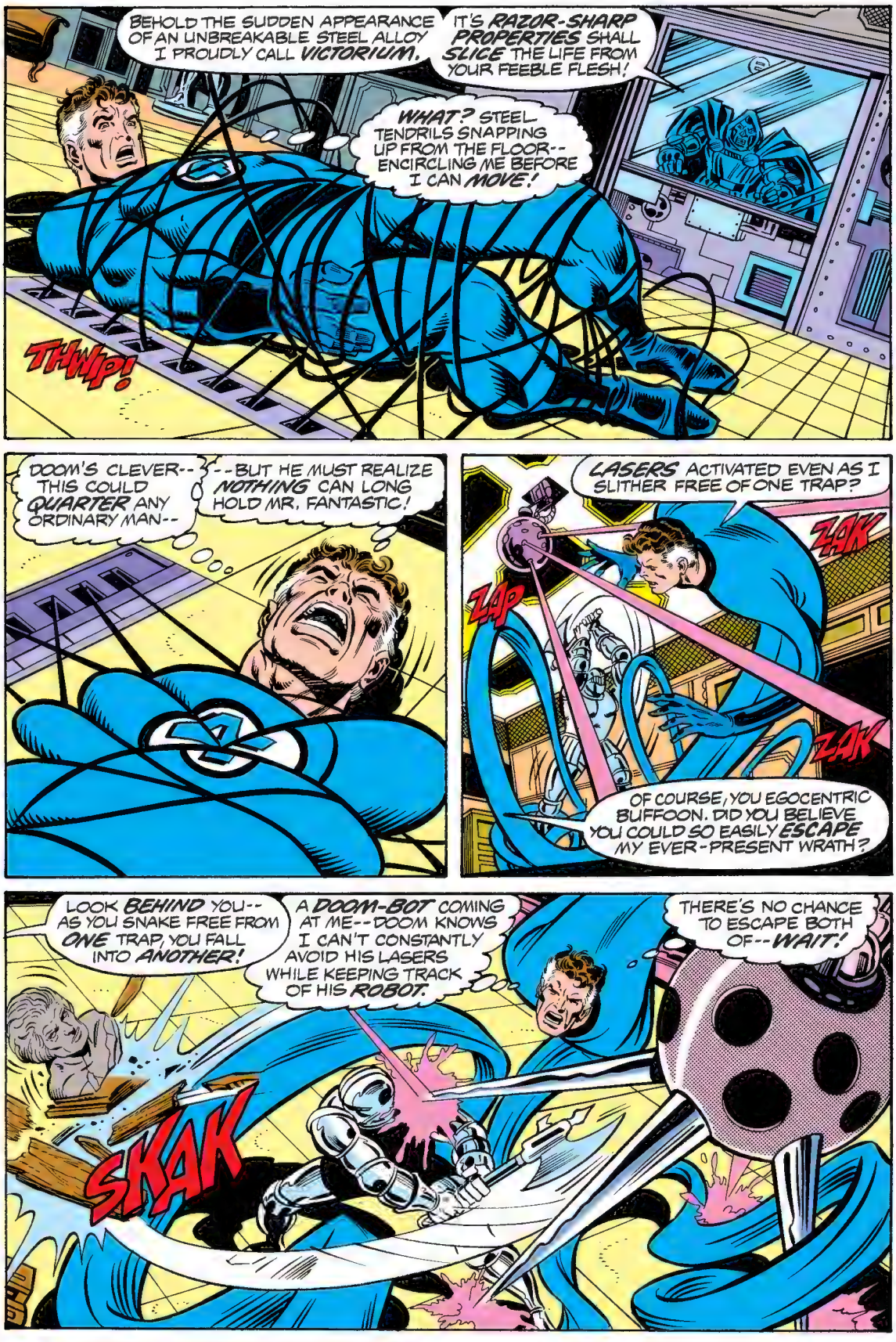
ENOUGH! THIS ISN'T THE TIME FOR BICKERING.
YES, MOMMY.
SIGHHHH.

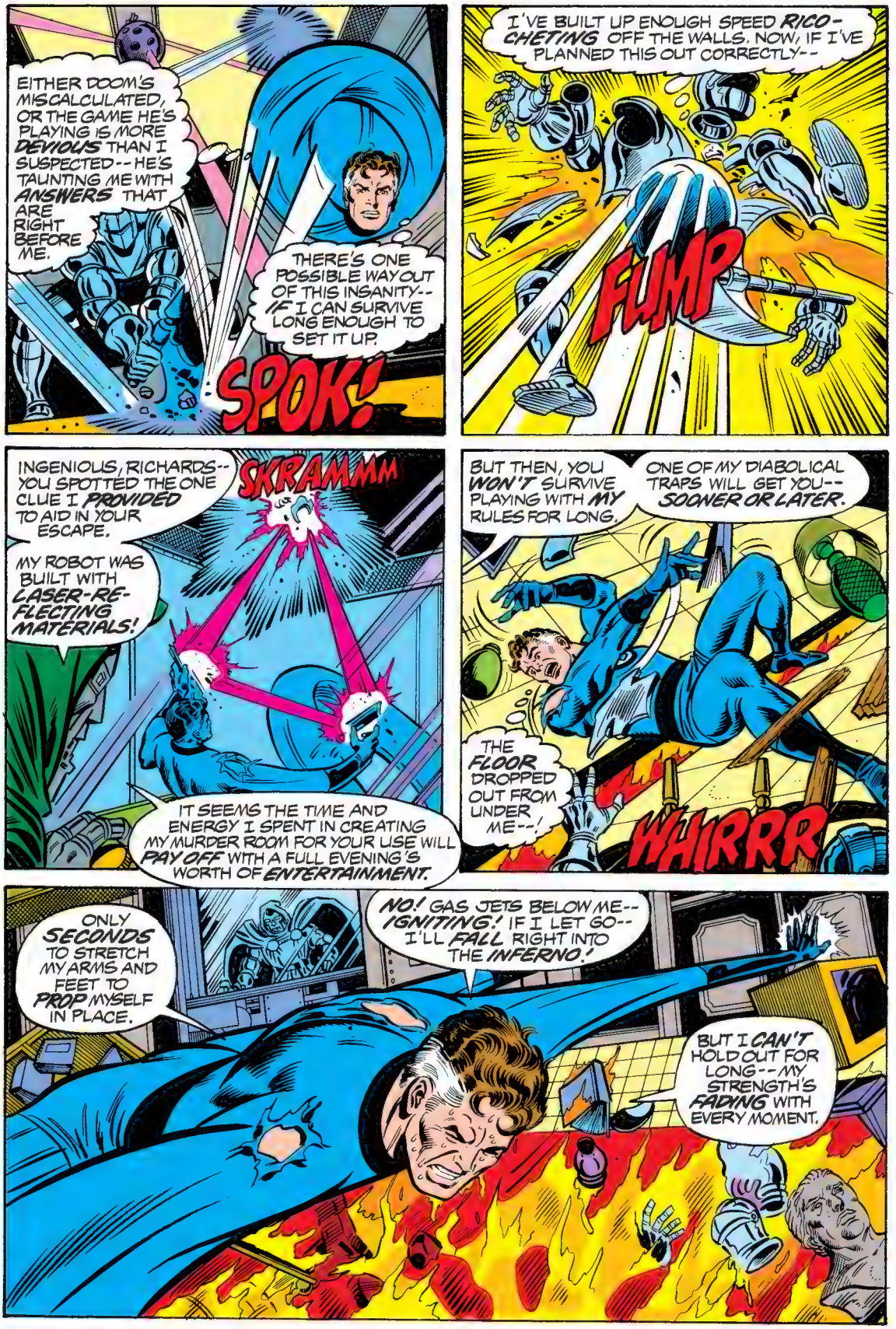
MEAN-WHILE...
...CALCULATED THE WIND VELO-CITY PERFECTLY...
THERE'S DOOM'S LAB.
IF HE HASN'T SPOTTED ME, I'LL BE ABLE TO--
WELCOME, OLD FRIEND... I HAVE BEEN AWAITING YOUR PRESENCE.
SHOW YOURSELF, DOOM--
I HAVEN'T FLOWN 4,000 MILES TO SPEAK WITH A BODILESS VOICE!
THEN TURN AND STARE IN ABJECT AWE AT DOOM THE FIRST!
THE NEW RULER OF THE WORLD!
AT LONG LAST! IT'S THE TWO OF US... AS IT WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO BE.
INDEED... SO YOU BE-LIEVE IN DESTINY EVEN AS I DO. IT BEGAN WITH US BOTH ...IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT IT ENDS THIS WAY AS WELL.
DO YOU REMEMBER, RICHARDS... THOSE MANY YEARS BACK--IN COLLEGE.
FROM THE FIRST, YOU WERE AN ANNOYANCE...
SAY, WE'RE BOTH HERE ON SCIENCE SCHOLARSHIPS. HOW ABOUT ROOMING TOGETHER?
BAH! I DESIRE PRIVACY!
"YES, PRIVACY, TO CONDUCT MY EXPERI-MENTS...
"BOTH IN SCIENCE... AND THE MYSTIC ARTS THAT I IN-HERITED FROM MY MOTHER.
GIVE ME THAT! NOW GET OUT! GET OUT!!
"BUT YOU WOULDN'T ALLOW ME MY PRIVACY, WOULD YOU?
FELLA, YOU'D BETTER DOUBLE-CHECK SOME OF THESE EQUA-TIONS. YOU'RE A FEW DECIMALS OFF...

"BUT I PERSEVERED, AND FOUND A FOOL TO ASSIST ME IN MY WORK.
IF THE FACULTY STAFF EVER LEARNS THAT YOU'VE BEEN CONDUCTING FORBIDDEN EXPERIMENTS...
SILENCE! JUST DO AS YOU'RE TOLD. THROW THE SWITCH!
"BUT SOMETHING WENT WRONG, AND MY DEVICE EXPLODED..
WHAT WAS THAT?
IT CAME FROM VON DOOM'S DORMITORY ROOM!
BOOM!
"...WITH TERRIBLE CONSEQUENCES. MY FACE WAS HOPELESSLY DISFIGURED!
I AM EXPELLING YOU FROM THIS SCHOOL BEFORE YOU CAUSE GREATER HARM TO YOURSELF, OR TO US!
BAH! THERE IS NOTHING MORE YOU CAN TEACH ME ANYWAY.
"I LEFT YOUR SCHOOL... YOUR COUNTRY--AND TOOK MYSELF TO TIBET WHERE I COULD LEARN THE SECRETS OF FORBIDDEN BLACK MAGIC.
"I WAS LOST... BUT A MYSTERIOUS ORDER OF MONKS TOOK ME IN...
"...AND TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING I HAD BEEN SEEKING FOR SO VERY LONG...
"SOON I WAS THEIR MASTER --AND THEY FORGED FOR ME THE IRON ARMOR I NOW SO PROUDLY WEAR."
BUT IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU... MY FACE WOULD NOT BE A BATTLE-GROUND OF GROTESQUE SCARS.
IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU--NONE OF THIS MIGHT HAVE BEEN NECESSARY.
YOU'RE INSANE, DOOM... I TRIED TO HELP... TO WARN YOU ABOUT YOUR MISCALCULATIONS.
BAH! THE TIME FOR TALK IS OVER!
FOR YEARS, I HAVE AWAITED THIS DAY. I HAVE INCREASED THE MICRO-CIRCUITRY IN MY ARMOR TO THE POINT THAT I AM AN INVINCIBLE WAR MACHINE!
AND NOW, ALL MY VAST RESOURCES SHALL BE USED TO TOTALLY DESTROY MY MOST HATED FOE!

DOOM'S GONE MAD! BUT HE HOLDS THE POWER TO CARRY THROUGH HIS INSANE PLANS.
SKAM
AND NOW HE'S USING ALL THAT POWER TO GET RID OF ME.
BUT HE MUSTN'T SUCCEED... I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN STOP HIM!
SPOK
WHY DO YOU RUN, RICHARDS? FATE HAS ALREADY ORDAINED THAT DOCTOR DOOM SHALL BE MASTER OF THE PLANET EARTH!
THERE IS NO HOPE FOR YOU NOW... WHY PROTEST YOUR OBVIOUS NEED FOR DESTRUCTION?
STAND STILL, RICHARDS! YOU WRITHE LIKE THE SLITHERING SNAKE!
BUT THAT SHALL DO LITTLE MORE THAN DELAY THE INEVITABLE!
THAT'S ALL I'M HOPING FOR, DOOM--TO BUY TIME UNTIL I FIGURE OUT YOUR ONE WEAK LINK.
WHOH!
YOU'RE NOT INVINCIBLE, DOOM, YOU'VE BEEN DEFEATED BEFORE--I CAN STOP YOU AGAIN!
THIS IS BEYOND ALL BELIEF! YOU ACTUALLY THINK BRUTE FORCE ALONE CAN STOP THE TIDE OF POWER THAT IS MINE TO COMMAND?
YOU ARE MORE IGNORANT THAN THE BRUTISH THING!
YOUR INSIPID STRETCHING POWERS MEAN NOTHING TO ME--NOTHING!!


BUT REED RICHARDS ACTS WITH UNEXPECTED SPEED AS AN ELONGATED ARM SLITHERS BETWEEN THE OPENING IN DOOM'S AMAZING ARMOR, AND...
WHAT? YOU SEEK TO SEVER MY HIDDEN CIRCUITRY FROM WITHIN?
I HAVE UNDER-ESTIMATED YOUR DOLTISH DETERMINATION!
JUST AS YOU HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY UNDER-ESTIMATED THE FULL EXTENT OF MY POWER!
ZAK!
AGGGHH! HE'S ELECTRI-FIED HIMSELF... IT'S EVEN CUTTING THROUGH MY INSULATED GLOVES... CAN'T KEEP A HANDHOLD!
SHOCKED, MY LONG-TIME ACQUAINTANCE? HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN MY ARMOR MAKES ME A VERITABLE ONE-MAN ARSENAL?
NO MATTER... THOUGH YOU ARE STILL A THORN IN MY SIDE, YOU CAN BE REMOVED EVEN WITHOUT MY BEING HERE.
AFTER ALL, YOU UNMITIGATED FOOL, YOU HAVE BEEN UNWITTINGLY LED INTO MY MACABRE MURDER ROOM!
AND I GUARANTEE ITS SPLENDID DECOR WILL BE ONE YOU SHALL NEVER FORGET!


BEHOLD THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF AN UNBREAKABLE STEEL ALLOY I PROUDLY CALL VICTORIUM.
IT'S RAZOR-SHARP PROPERTIES SHALL SLICE THE LIFE FROM YOUR FEEBLE FLESH!
WHAT? STEEL TENDRILS SNAPPING UP FROM THE FLOOR-- ENCIRCLING ME BEFORE I CAN MOVE!
THWIP!
DOOM'S CLEVER-- THIS COULD QUARTER ANY ORDINARY MAN--
--BUT HE MUST REALIZE NOTHING CAN LONG HOLD MR. FANTASTIC!
LASERS ACTIVATED EVEN AS I SLITHER FREE OF ONE TRAP?
ZAK
ZAP
ZAK
OF COURSE, YOU EGOCENTRIC BUFFOON. DID YOU BELIEVE YOU COULD SO EASILY ESCAPE MY EVER-PRESENT WRATH?
LOOK BEHIND YOU-- AS YOU SNAKE FREE FROM ONE TRAP, YOU FALL INTO ANOTHER!
A DOOM-BOT COMING AT ME-- DOOM KNOWS I CAN'T CONSTANTLY AVOID HIS LASERS WHILE KEEPING TRACK OF HIS ROBOT.
THERE'S NO CHANCE TO ESCAPE BOTH OF-- WAIT!
SKAK

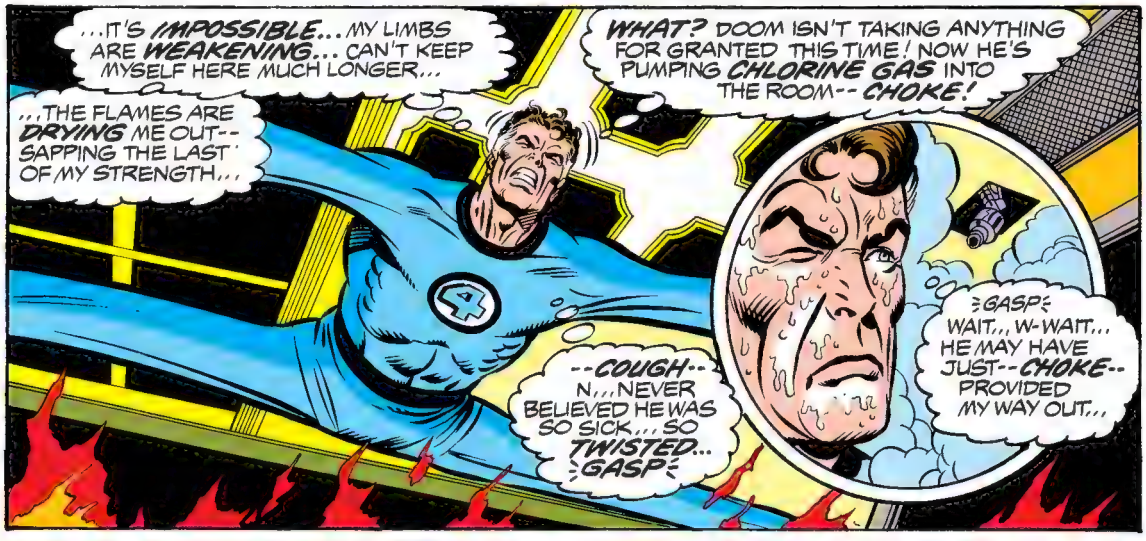

EITHER DOOM'S MISCALCULATED, OR THE GAME HE'S PLAYING IS MORE DEVIOUS THAN I SUSPECTED--HE'S TAUNTING ME WITH ANSWERS THAT ARE RIGHT BEFORE ME.
THERE'S ONE POSSIBLE WAY OUT OF THIS INSANITY--IF I CAN SURVIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SET IT UP.
SPOK!
I'VE BUILT UP ENOUGH SPEED RICOCHETING OFF THE WALLS. NOW, IF I'VE PLANNED THIS OUT CORRECTLY--
FLUMP
INGENIOUS, RICHARDS--YOU SPOTTED THE ONE CLUE I PROVIDED TO AID IN YOUR ESCAPE.
SKRAMMM
MY ROBOT WAS BUILT WITH LASER-REFLECTING MATERIALS!
IT SEEMS THE TIME AND ENERGY I SPENT IN CREATING MY MURDER ROOM FOR YOUR USE WILL PAY OFF WITH A FULL EVENING'S WORTH OF ENTERTAINMENT.
BUT THEN, YOU WON'T SURVIVE PLAYING WITH MY RULES FOR LONG.
ONE OF MY DIABOLICAL TRAPS WILL GET YOU--SOONER OR LATER.
THE FLOOR DROPPED OUT FROM UNDER ME--!
WHIRRR
ONLY SECONDS TO STRETCH MY ARMS AND FEET TO PROP MYSELF IN PLACE.
NO! GAS JETS BELOW ME--IGNITING! IF I LET GO--I'LL FALL RIGHT INTO THE INFERNO!
BUT I CAN'T HOLD OUT FOR LONG--MY STRENGTH'S FADING WITH EVERY MOMENT.

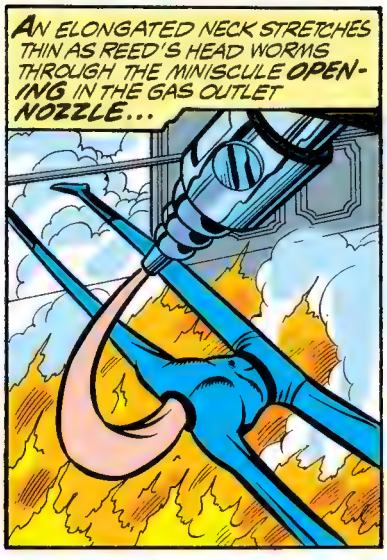
CHAPTER 3: AT LONG LAST, DEFEAT! AT LONG LAST, VICTORY!

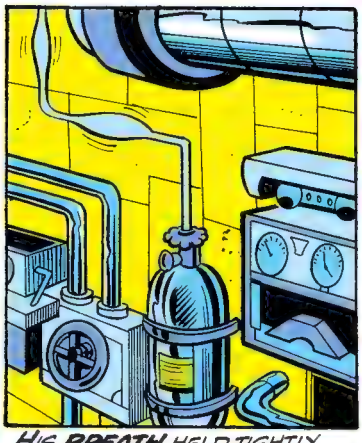
EVER SINCE 1945, THE UNITED NATIONS HAS BEEN A PROUD SYMBOL FOR BETTERING A WORLD RAVAGED BY WAR, HUNGER AND DISEASE...
TONIGHT, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HAS GATHERED TO VOTE ON A PROPOSAL FOR CONDEMNING THE NATION OF LATVERIA FOR "GROSS NEGLIGENCE IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS!"
BUT, AS A VOICE VOTE IS TO BE TAKEN, SOLID WOODEN DOORS SLAM OPEN, AND STRANGE UNIFORMED GUARDS CARRYING RIFLES THE LIKE OF WHICH CIVILIZED NATIONS HAVE NEVER SEEN BEFORE--
--USHER IN A MONSTER-SIZED STATUE REPRESENTING THE MONARCH WHOLLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS NIGHT'S GATHERING.
VOT IS THIS? A CAPITALISTIC TRICK?
BY ALLAH, WHO BE THESE MEN?
DELEGATES OF THE UNITED NATIONS, REMAIN IN YOUR SEATS!
DOOM THE FIRST PRESENTS TO YOU A GIFT BEFORE THE CRUCIAL VOTE IS TAKEN.

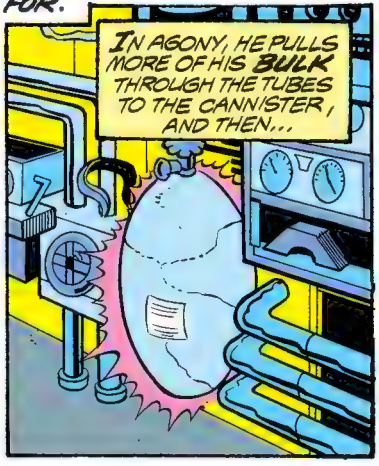
MEANWHILE, OUTSIDE ON THE PROMENADE...
C'MON, C'MON... I'M GETTIN' ITCHY PANTS!
WE GOTTA GET MOVIN'!
SO WHO'S STOPPING YOU?
FLAME ON!
SHEESH! IT'S ABOUT TIME!
THE STATUE IS IN PLACE.
ALERT THE MASTER!
IT IS ALREADY DONE!
NUTS! WE'RE TOO LATE! THEY'VE UNLOADED DOOM'S STATUE!
BEN! JOHNNY! THAT GUARD JUST PRESSED A CONTROL BUTTON--
I DON'T CARE IF HE PRESSED HIS BLAMED PANTS!
NO PURPLE-PANTY-WAISTED FLUNKY, OR CHEAP HUNK 'A MODELLIN' CLAY'S GONNA STOP THE EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED THING!
IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!
BUT... AT LONG LAST, I AM WATCHING RICHARDS SUFFER AS I'VE SUFFERED THESE MANY YEARS.
THE ARROGANT SIMPLETON ALWAYS CONSIDERED HIMSELF MY BETTER. BUT NOW, AFTER TOO MANY DEFEATS, I--
HOLD! THE SIGNAL FROM NEW YORK.
ALL STANDS READY... I MUST HURRY TO MY SOLARTRON!
A SHAME... I HAD WANTED TO OBSERVE RICHARDS' FINAL MOMENTS IN PAINFUL AGONY...
BUT... ALAS, MY AUTOMATIC MURDER ROOM WILL NOW HAVE TO COMPLETE HIS DESTRUCTION WITHOUT MY PRESENCE.

AND JUST **WHAT** IS HAPPENING TO THE MAN **OTHER** MEN CALL MISTER FANTASTIC...

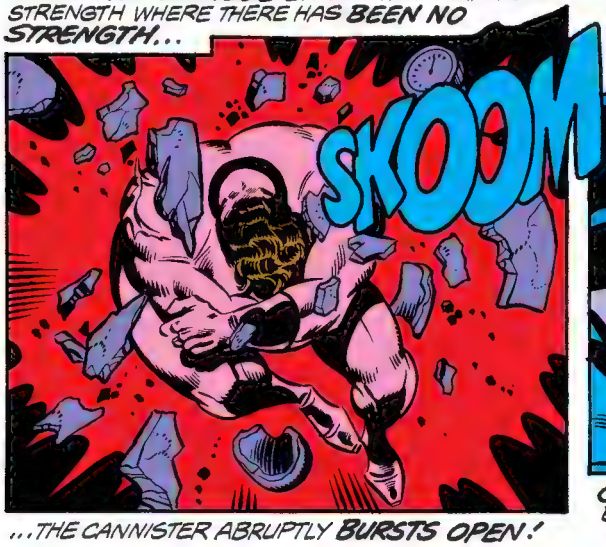

...IT'S **IMPOSSIBLE**... MY LIMBS ARE **WEAKENING**... CAN'T KEEP MYSELF HERE MUCH LONGER...
...THE FLAMES ARE **DRYING** ME OUT-- SAPPING THE LAST OF MY STRENGTH...
WHAT? DOOM ISN'T TAKING ANYTHING FOR GRANTED THIS TIME! NOW HE'S PUMPING **CHLORINE GAS** INTO THE ROOM-- **CHOKE!**
--**COUGH**-- N...NEVER BELIEVED HE WAS SO SICK... SO **TWISTED**... :GASP:
:GASP: WAIT... W-WAIT... HE MAY HAVE JUST--**CHOKE**-- PROVIDED MY WAY OUT...




HIS **BREATH** HELD TIGHTLY, REED SLOWLY **OOZES** A CAREFUL PATH THROUGH NARROW COPPER TUBING...TO THE **CANNISTER** WHERE THE GAS IS CONTAINED.


HE CAN **BARELY** HOLD ON, HIS WIND STARTS TO GIVE OUT, BUT, IF HE DARES **BREATHE**-- MISTER FANTASTIC WILL BE **DONE FOR.**
IN AGONY, HE PULLS MORE OF HIS **BULK** THROUGH THE TUBES TO THE CANNISTER, AND THEN...

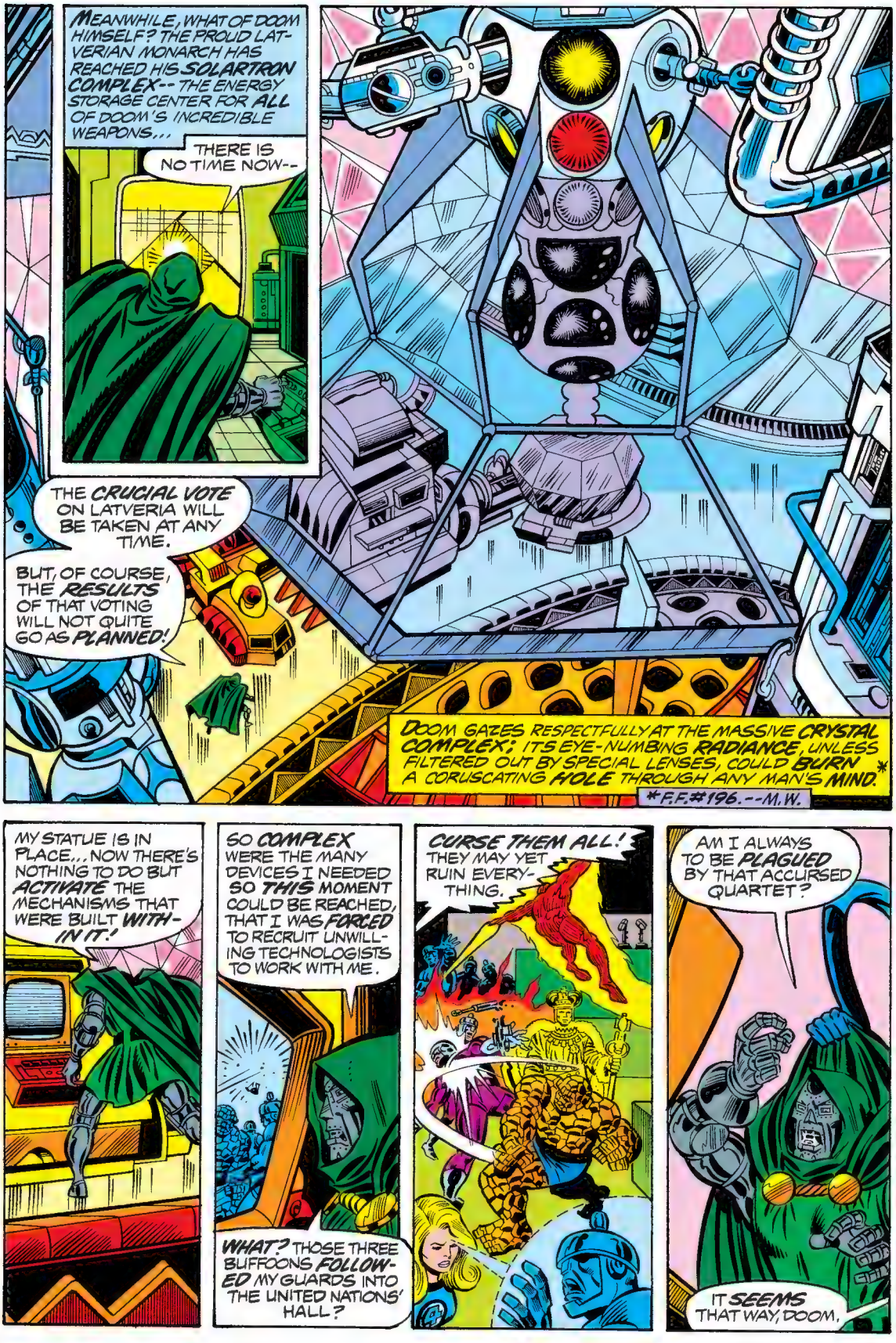
...IN AN **IMPOSSIBLE** EFFORT THAT SUMMONS STRENGTH WHERE THERE HAS **BEEN NO STRENGTH**...



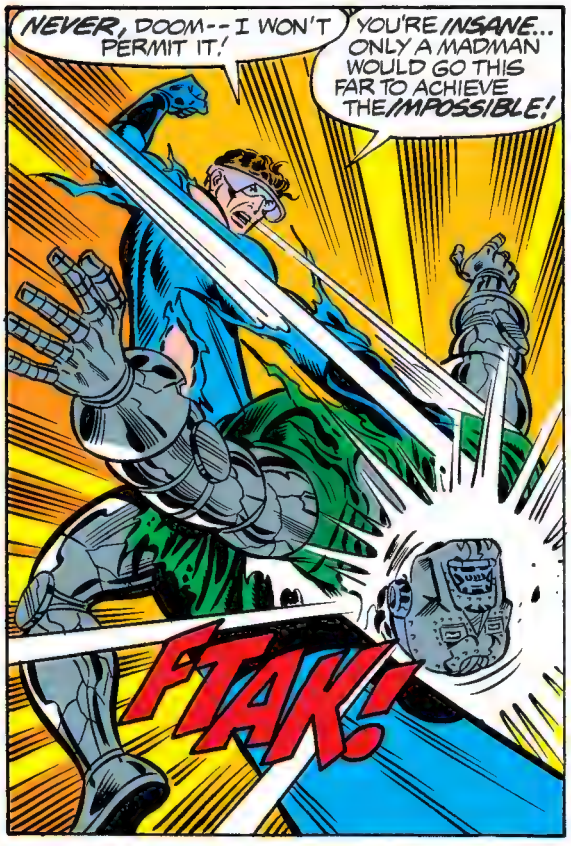
...THE CANNISTER ABRUPTLY **BURSTS OPEN!**

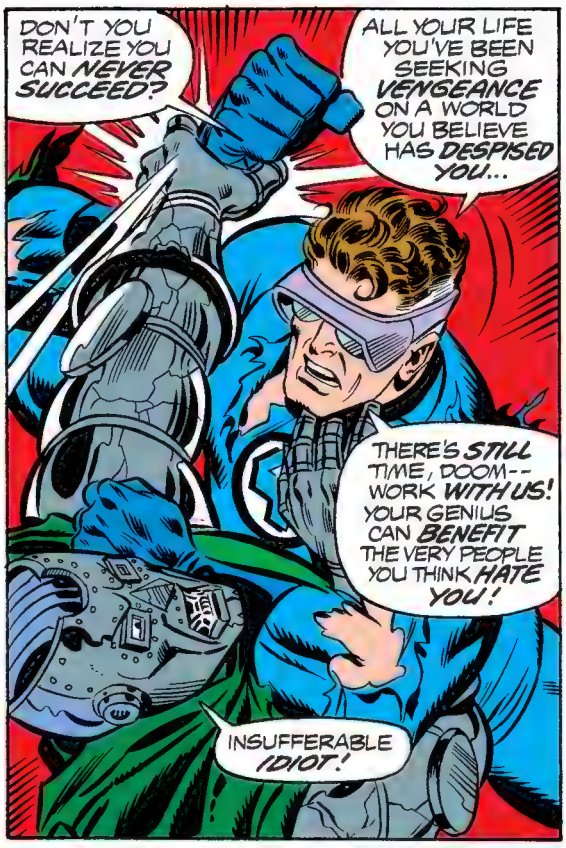
BONE-WEARY, TIRED BEYOND ALL BELIEF, REED RICHARDS SLUMPS HALF-DEAD TO THE FLOOR, HIS THROAT THIRSTILY SUCKING IN THE CLEAN PURE **AIR** OF THE TERMINAL ROOM...

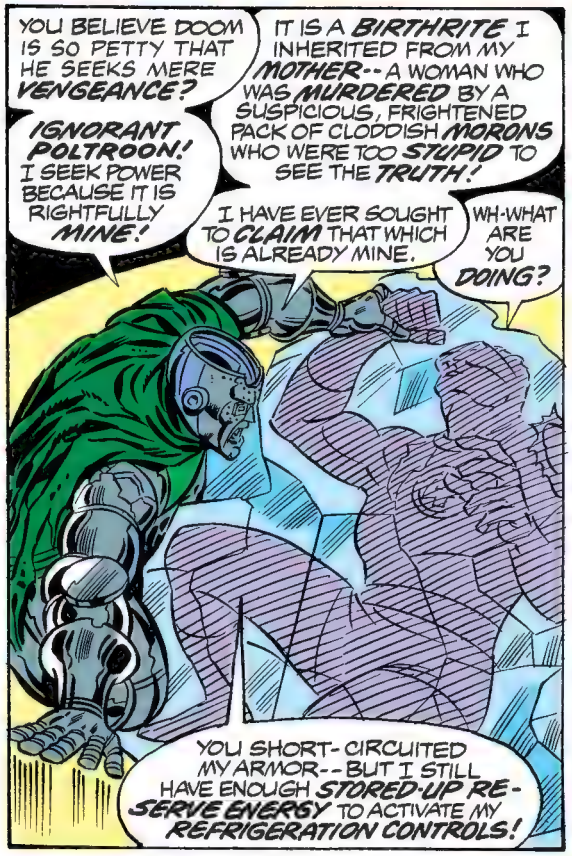
ONCE MORE MISTER FANTASTIC HAS SURVIVED, BUT THE **PAIN** HE FEELS CUTTING THROUGH HIM **ABROGATES** ALL SENSE OF VICTORY...

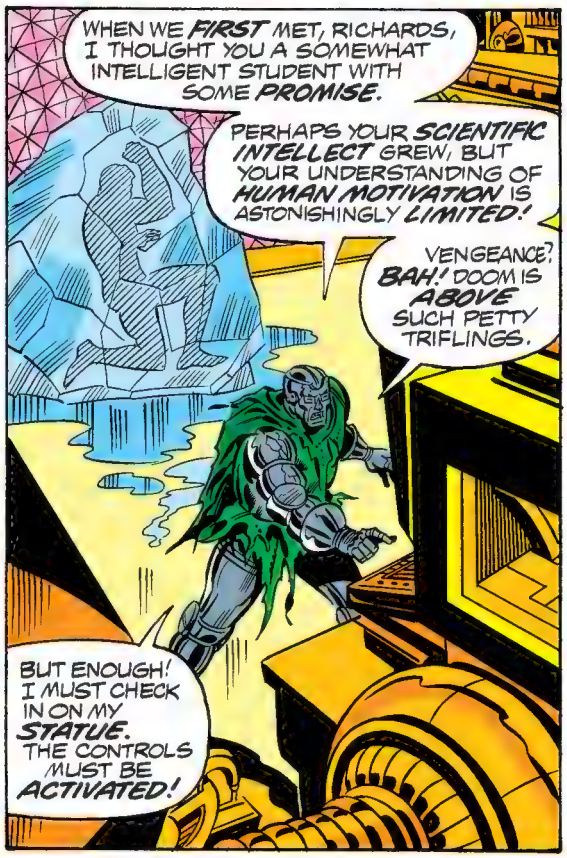

MEANWHILE, WHAT OF DOOM HIMSELF? THE PROUD LATVERIAN MONARCH HAS REACHED HIS SOLARTRON COMPLEX-- THE ENERGY STORAGE CENTER FOR ALL OF DOOM'S INCREDIBLE WEAPONS...
THERE IS NO TIME NOW--
THE CRUCIAL VOTE ON LATVERIA WILL BE TAKEN AT ANY TIME.
BUT, OF COURSE, THE RESULTS OF THAT VOTING WILL NOT QUITE GO AS PLANNED!
DOOM GAZES RESPECTFULLY AT THE MASSIVE CRYSTAL COMPLEX; ITS EYE-NUMBING RADIANCE, UNLESS FILTERED OUT BY SPECIAL LENSES, COULD BURN A CORUSCATING HOLE THROUGH ANY MAN'S MIND.*
*F.F.#196.--M.W.
MY STATUE IS IN PLACE... NOW THERE'S NOTHING TO DO BUT ACTIVATE THE MECHANISMS THAT WERE BUILT WITHIN IT!
SO COMPLEX WERE THE MANY DEVICES I NEEDED SO THIS MOMENT COULD BE REACHED, THAT I WAS FORCED TO RECRUIT UNWILLING TECHNOLOGISTS TO WORK WITH ME.
WHAT? THOSE THREE BUFFOONS FOLLOWED MY GUARDS INTO THE UNITED NATIONS' HALL?
CURSE THEM ALL! THEY MAY YET RUIN EVERYTHING.
AM I ALWAYS TO BE PLAGUED BY THAT ACCURSED QUARTET?
IT SEEMS THAT WAY, DOOM.

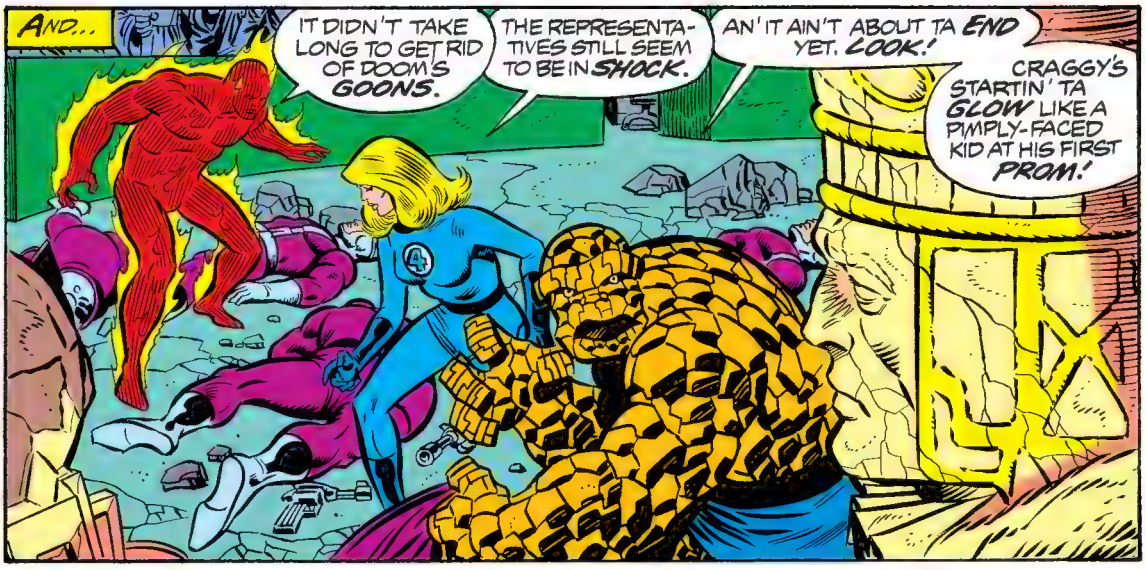
RICHARDS? YOU STILL LIVE? HOW MANY LIVES HAVE YOU GOT?
ONE'S SUFFICIENT --IF YOU USE IT WISELY.
WAIT--THAT DEVICE IN YOUR HAND--IT CAN'T BE?!?
YOU RECOGNIZE IT, DOOM? THEN YOU KNOW IT HAS THE POWER TO SHORT-CIRCUIT YOUR ARMOR!
ONCE I REALIZED YOU WERE THE MADMAN BEHIND ALL THIS, I CONSTRUCTED IT AFTER SHIELD RESCUED ME.*
*FF#197.--M.
NO! DESTROY IT AT ONCE! I DEMAND--
ZAKKK
NOOOOO!!
IT WORKED.. HIS ARMOR'S USELESS--BUT WAS I TOO LATE?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
THE TERMINALS IN MY ARMOR REFUSE TO RESPOND!
YOU'VE DESTROYED MY FIGHTING CAPABILITIES!
BUT YOU STILL HAVEN'T STOPPED ME. MY ULTIMATE PLANS WILL STILL SUCCEED! I HAVE ONLY TO REACH THE CONTROLS--


NEVER, DOOM--I WON'T PERMIT IT!
YOU'RE INSANE... ONLY A MADMAN WOULD GO THIS FAR TO ACHIEVE THE IMPOSSIBLE!
FTAK!


DON'T YOU REALIZE YOU CAN NEVER SUCCEED?
ALL YOUR LIFE YOU'VE BEEN SEEKING VENGEANCE ON A WORLD YOU BELIEVE HAS DESPISED YOU...
THERE'S STILL TIME, DOOM--WORK WITH US! YOUR GENIUS CAN BENEFIT THE VERY PEOPLE YOU THINK HATE YOU!
INSUFFERABLE IDIOT!


YOU BELIEVE DOOM IS SO PETTY THAT HE SEEKS MERE VENGEANCE?
IT IS A BIRTHRITE I INHERITED FROM MY MOTHER--A WOMAN WHO WAS MURDERED BY A SUSPICIOUS, FRIGHTENED PACK OF CLODDISH MORONS WHO WERE TOO STUPID TO SEE THE TRUTH!
IGNORANT POLTROON! I SEEK POWER BECAUSE IT IS RIGHTFULLY MINE!
I HAVE EVER SOUGHT TO CLAIM THAT WHICH IS ALREADY MINE.
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
YOU SHORT-CIRCUITED MY ARMOR--BUT I STILL HAVE ENOUGH STORED-UP RESERVE ENERGY TO ACTIVATE MY REFRIGERATION CONTROLS!


WHEN WE FIRST MET, RICHARDS, I THOUGHT YOU A SOMEWHAT INTELLIGENT STUDENT WITH SOME PROMISE.
PERHAPS YOUR SCIENTIFIC INTELLECT GREW, BUT YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN MOTIVATION IS ASTONISHINGLY LIMITED!
VENGEANCE? BAH! DOOM IS ABOVE SUCH PETTY TRIFLINGS.
BUT ENOUGH! I MUST CHECK IN ON MY STATUE. THE CONTROLS MUST BE ACTIVATED!

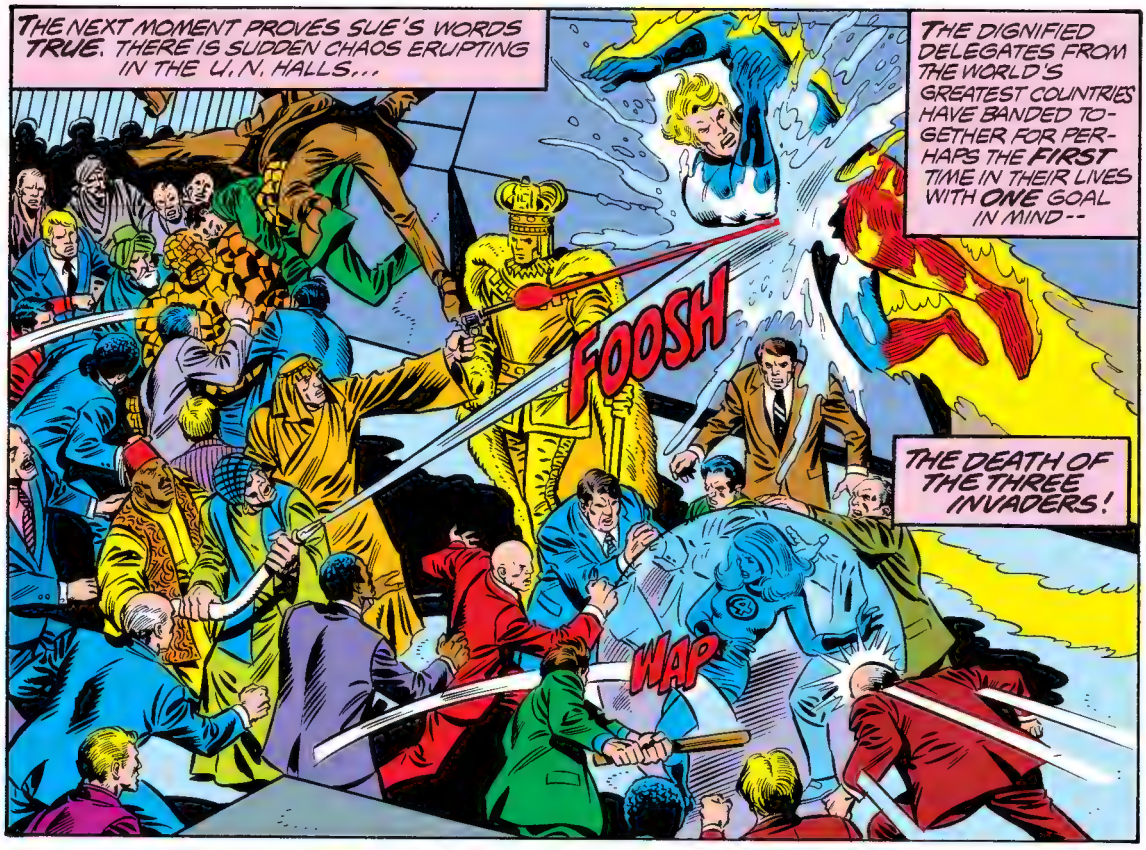

AND...
IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG TO GET RID OF DOOM'S GOONS.
THE REPRESENTATIVES STILL SEEM TO BE IN SHOCK.
AN' IT AIN'T ABOUT TA END YET. LOOK!
CRAGGY'S STARTIN' TA GLOW LIKE A PIMPLY-FACED KID AT HIS FIRST PROM!

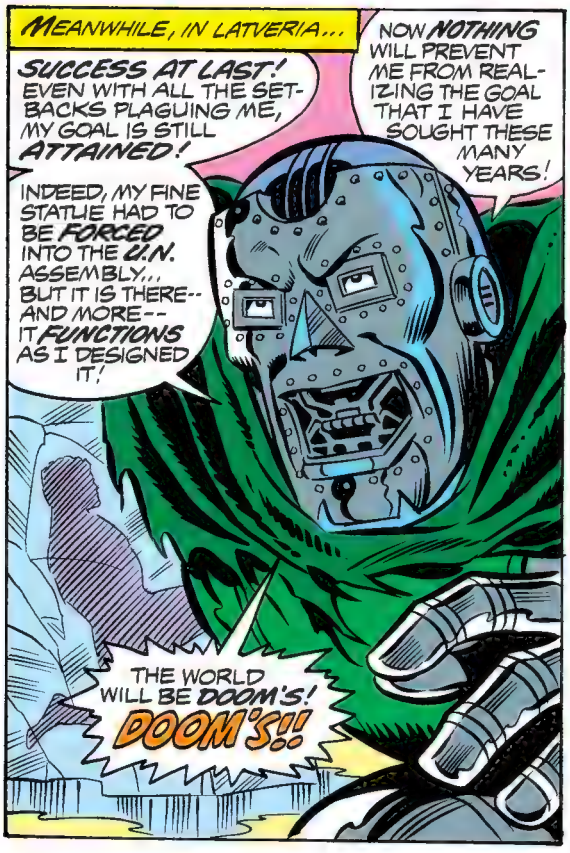
JOHNNY! BEN! IT'S FIRING SOME KIND OF RAY--
DOES THAT MEAN REED FAILED TO STOP DOOM?
THERE ISN'T TIME FOR ANSWERS, FOR THE NEXT MOMENT, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS BATHED IN AN EERIE AMBER GLOW...

...THAT TRIGGERS THE PRIME DIRECTION FUNCTIONS OF THEIR BRAIN.
AND, AT LONG LAST--DOCTOR DOOM'S FULL PLAN IS REVEALED!

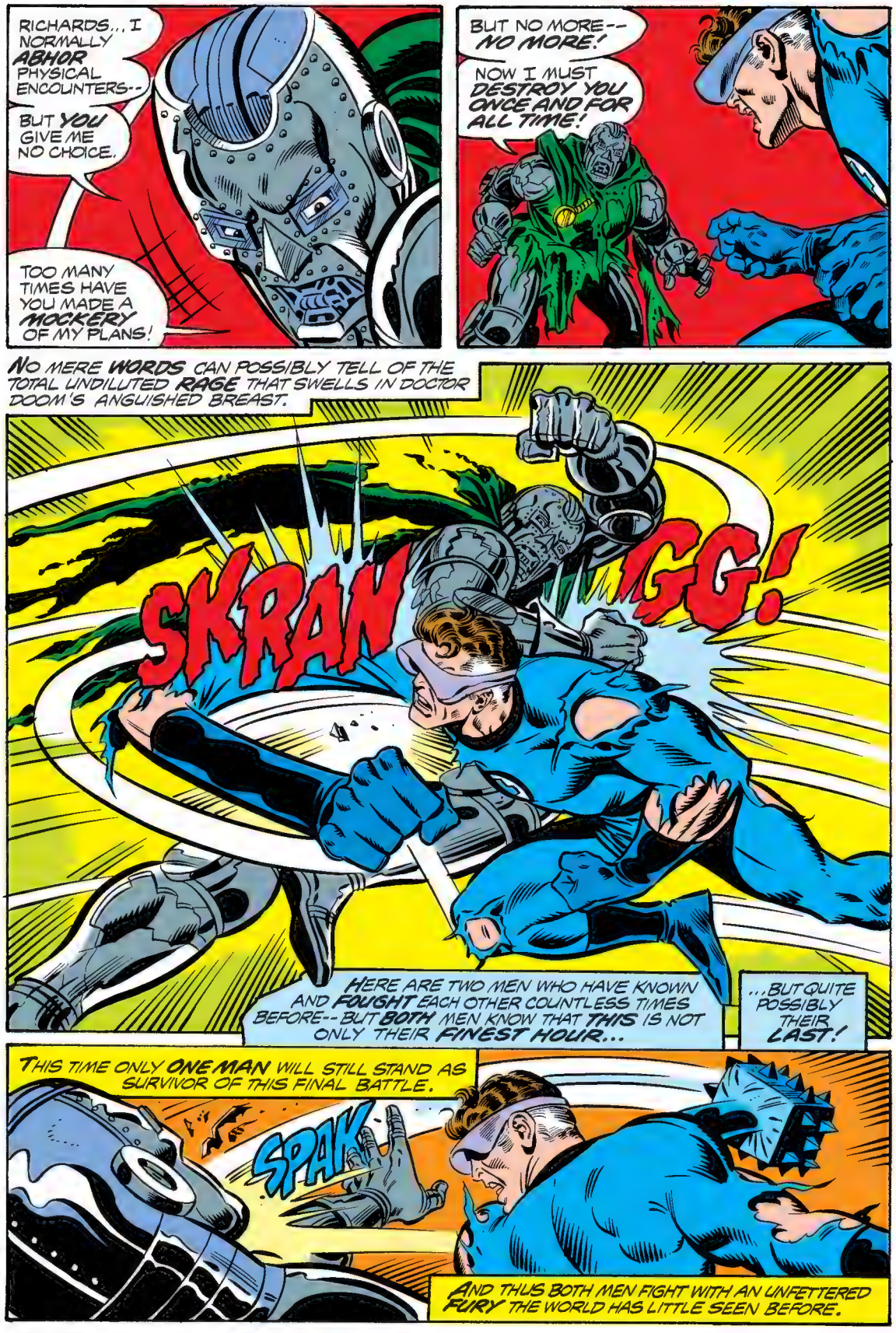
THROUGH CONTROL OVER THE U.N. DELEGATES--DOOM WILL RULE THE WORLD!

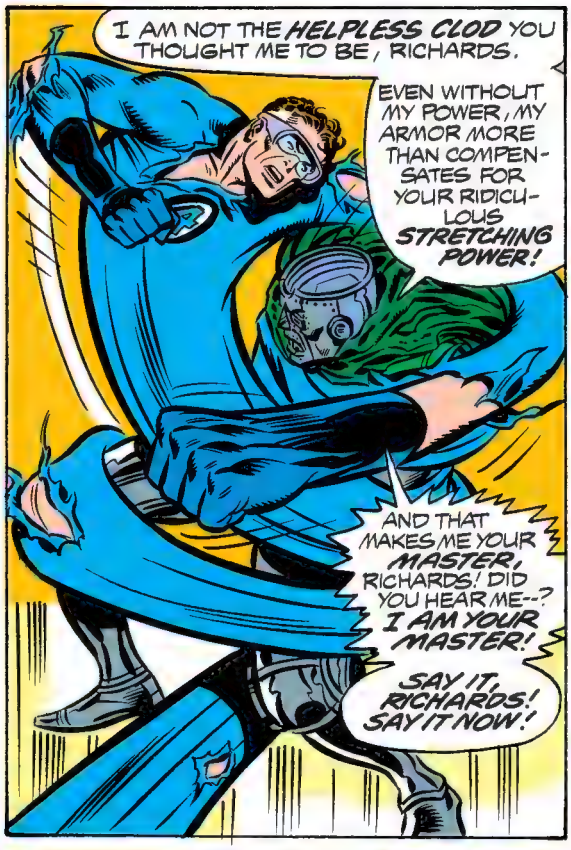
LOOK, THEY'RE COMING RIGHT AT US! WHAT DO WE DO?
CRIPES! WE CAN'T EVEN SMASH 'EM! WOTTA REVOLTIN' DEVELOPMENT THIS IS!
WHATEVER WE DECIDE, LET'S DECIDE NOW! WE HAVEN'T TIME TO WASTE.

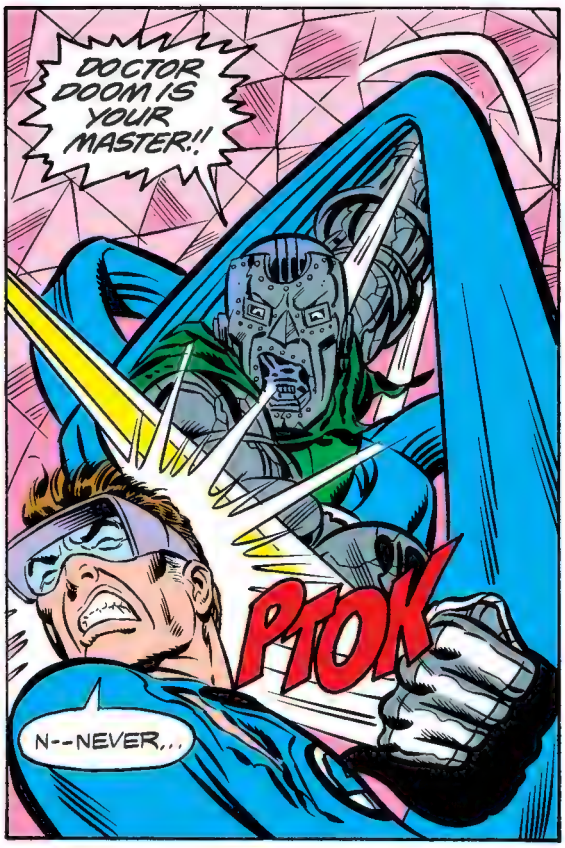

THE NEXT MOMENT PROVES SUE'S WORDS TRUE. THERE IS SUDDEN CHAOS ERUPTING IN THE U.N. HALLS...
THE DIGNIFIED DELEGATES FROM THE WORLD'S GREATEST COUNTRIES HAVE BANDED TOGETHER FOR PERHAPS THE FIRST TIME IN THEIR LIVES WITH ONE GOAL IN MIND--
FOOSH
THE DEATH OF THE THREE INVADERS!
WAP

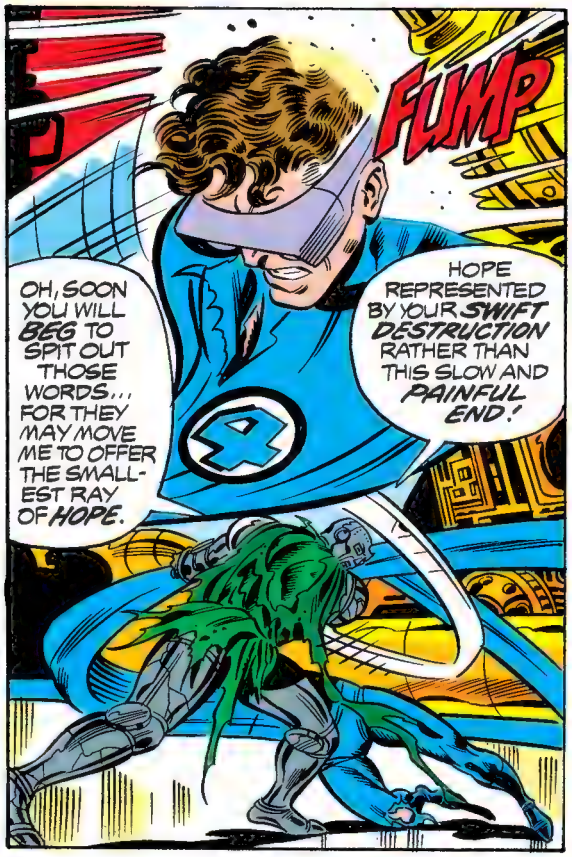

MEANWHILE, IN LATVERIA...
SUCCESS AT LAST! EVEN WITH ALL THE SETBACKS PLAGUING ME, MY GOAL IS STILL ATTAINED!
NOW NOTHING WILL PREVENT ME FROM REALIZING THE GOAL THAT I HAVE SOUGHT THESE MANY YEARS!
INDEED, MY FINE STATUE HAD TO BE FORCED INTO THE U.N. ASSEMBLY... BUT IT IS THERE-- AND MORE-- IT FUNCTIONS AS I DESIGNED IT!
THE WORLD WILL BE DOOM'S! DOOM'S!!

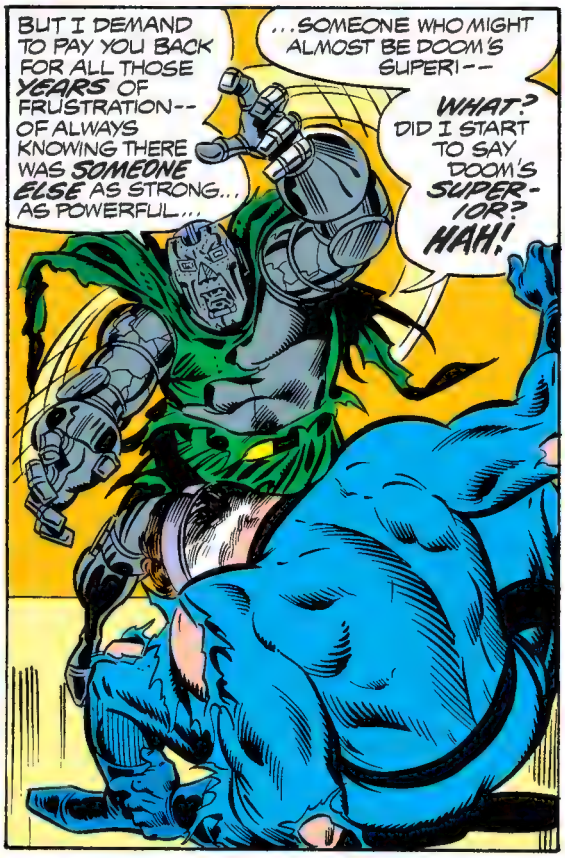
NO WAY, DOOM-- YOU HAVEN'T WON ANYTHING-- NOT WHILE I STILL BREATHE!!
NO! NO! NOT AGAIN!
IS THERE NO WAY TO SLAY YOU?!!
KRAK
NEXT TIME MAKE YOUR ICE TRAPS SOLID-- BEFORE IT TOTALLY FROZE AROUND ME I WAS ABLE TO WORM OUT AIR HOLES--
--WHICH ALSO SERVED TO WEAKEN THE BLOCK.


RICHARDS.., I NORMALLY ABHOR PHYSICAL ENCOUNTERS--
BUT YOU GIVE ME NO CHOICE.
TOO MANY TIMES HAVE YOU MADE A MOCKERY OF MY PLANS!
BUT NO MORE-- NO MORE!
NOW I MUST DESTROY YOU ONCE AND FOR ALL TIME!
NO MERE WORDS CAN POSSIBLY TELL OF THE TOTAL UNDILUTED RAGE THAT SWELLS IN DOCTOR DOOM'S ANGUISHED BREAST.
SKRAN
GG!
HERE ARE TWO MEN WHO HAVE KNOWN AND FOUGHT EACH OTHER COUNTLESS TIMES BEFORE-- BUT BOTH MEN KNOW THAT THIS IS NOT ONLY THEIR FINEST HOUR...
...BUT QUITE POSSIBLY THEIR LAST!
THIS TIME ONLY ONE MAN WILL STILL STAND AS SURVIVOR OF THIS FINAL BATTLE.
SPAK
AND THUS BOTH MEN FIGHT WITH AN UNFETTERED FURY THE WORLD HAS LITTLE SEEN BEFORE.

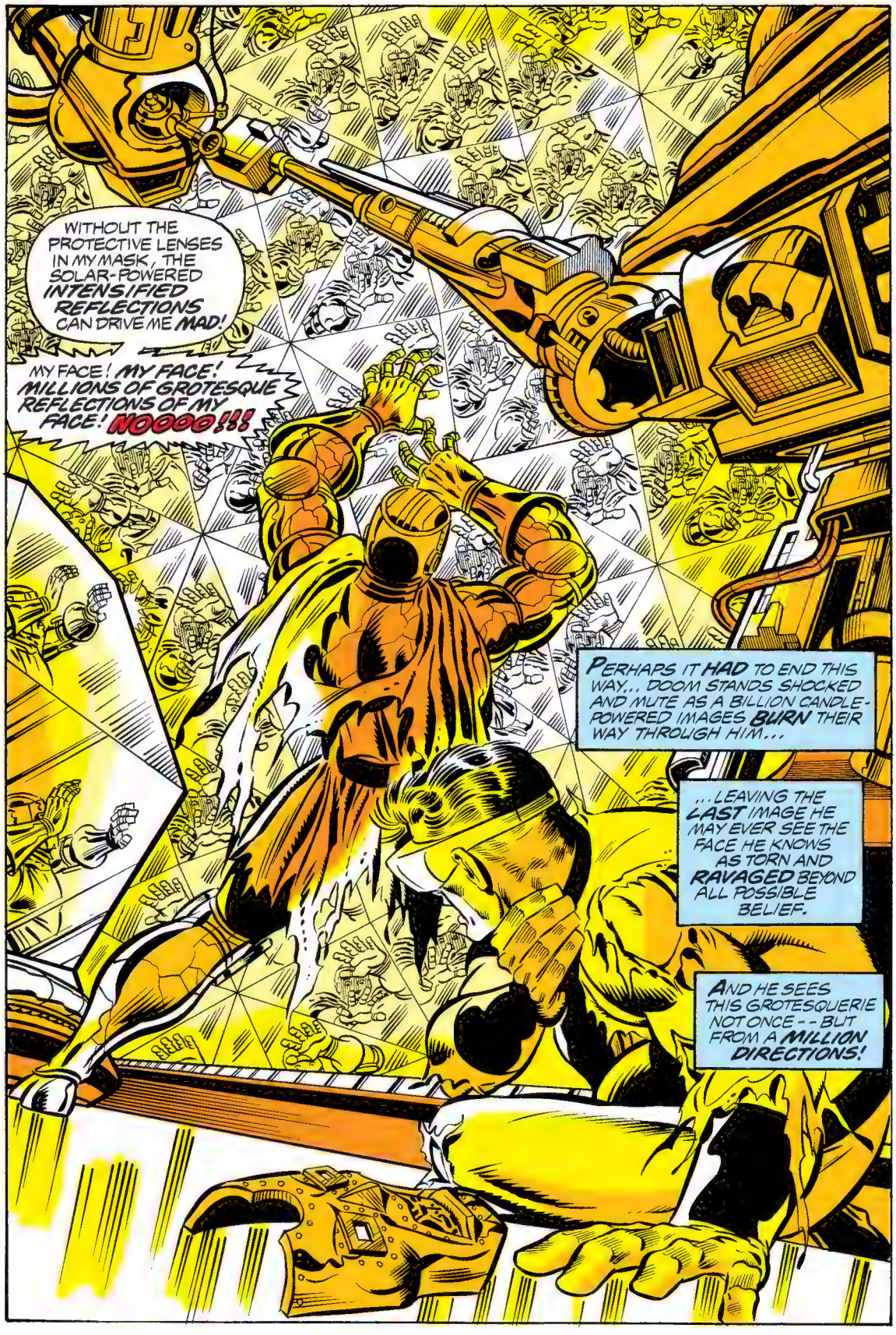

I AM NOT THE HELPLESS CLOD YOU THOUGHT ME TO BE, RICHARDS.
EVEN WITHOUT MY POWER, MY ARMOR MORE THAN COMPENSATES FOR YOUR RIDICULOUS STRETCHING POWER!
AND THAT MAKES ME YOUR MASTER, RICHARDS! DID YOU HEAR ME--? I AM YOUR MASTER!
SAY IT, RICHARDS! SAY IT NOW!

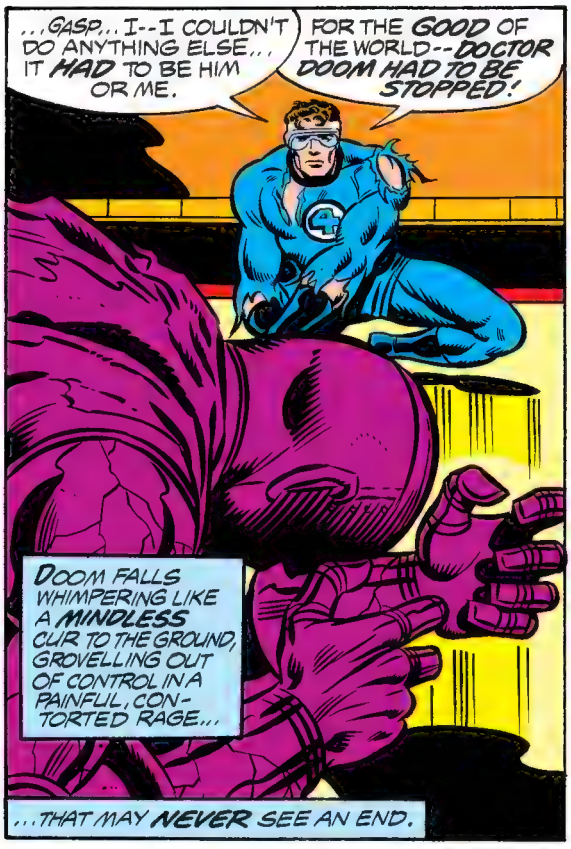

DOCTOR DOOM IS YOUR MASTER!!
PTOK
N--NEVER...


FUMP
OH, SOON YOU WILL BEG TO SPIT OUT THOSE WORDS... FOR THEY MAY MOVE ME TO OFFER THE SMALLEST RAY OF HOPE.
HOPE REPRESENTED BY YOUR SWIFT DESTRUCTION RATHER THAN THIS SLOW AND PAINFUL END!


BUT I DEMAND TO PAY YOU BACK FOR ALL THOSE YEARS OF FRUSTRATION-- OF ALWAYS KNOWING THERE WAS SOMEONE ELSE AS STRONG... AS POWERFUL...
...SOMEONE WHO MIGHT ALMOST BE DOOM'S SUPER!--
WHAT? DID I START TO SAY DOOM'S SUPER-IOR? HAH!

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN YOUR BETTER. ADMIT IT, RICHARDS-- ALWAYS!
ADMIT THAT YOU TAMPERED WITH THE MACHINE THAT DESTROYED MY FACE--!
IT WAS YOU-- IT HAD TO BE!
TELL ME YOU ENVIED MY BRILLIANCE,, TELL ME THE TRUTH-- TELL ME, CURSE YOU-- TELL ME AND PERHAPS I WILL END YOUR SUFFERIN THIS MOMENT!
YOU MUST TELL ME!
,,, I NEVER DID,,, TRIED TO HELP,,, YOUR CALCULATIONS,,, WERE WRONG,,,
EVEN ON YOUR DEATHBED YOU LIE?!! I KNOW YOU WERE RESPONSIBLE! I AM INCAPABLE OF MAKING MISTAKES! I--
WHAT? YOU SEEK TO UNMASK ME?
SO THAT IS YOUR INSIDIOUS PLAN? YOU TRY TO RILE ME WHILE PRYING LOOSE MY MASK!
BUT YOU ARE A FOOL! ONLY MY HIDDEN RING CAN UNLOCK--?
WHAT? IT SLIPS OFF, BUT--?
WHEN YOUR POWER SOURCE SHORT-CIRCUITED THE--?CHOKE?-- LOCKING MECHANISM WAS WEAKENED--
--YOU LUDICROUS CRETIN! DON'T YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE?!!


WITHOUT THE PROTECTIVE LENSES IN MY MASK, THE SOLAR-POWERED INTENSIFIED REFLECTIONS CAN DRIVE ME MAD!
MY FACE! MY FACE! MILLIONS OF GROTESQUE REFLECTIONS OF MY FACE! NOOOO!!!
PERHAPS IT HAD TO END THIS WAY... DOOM STANDS SHOCKED AND MUTE AS A BILLION CANDLE-POWERED IMAGES BURN THEIR WAY THROUGH HIM...
...LEAVING THE LAST IMAGE HE MAY EVER SEE THE FACE HE KNOWS AS TORN AND RAVAGED BEYOND ALL POSSIBLE BELIEF.
AND HE SEES THIS GROTESQUERIE NOT ONCE--BUT FROM A MILLION DIRECTIONS!

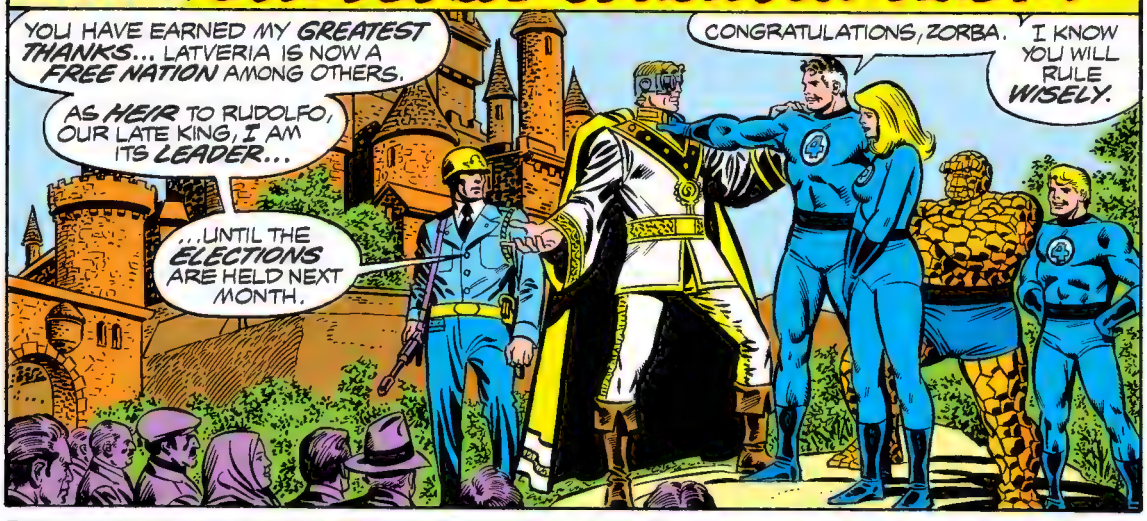

...GASP... I--I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING ELSE... IT HAD TO BE HIM OR ME.
FOR THE GOOD OF THE WORLD--DOCTOR DOOM HAD TO BE STOPPED!
DOOM FALLS WHIMPERING LIKE A MINDLESS CUR TO THE GROUND, GROVELLING OUT OF CONTROL IN A PAINFUL, CONTORTED RAGE...
...THAT MAY NEVER SEE AN END.

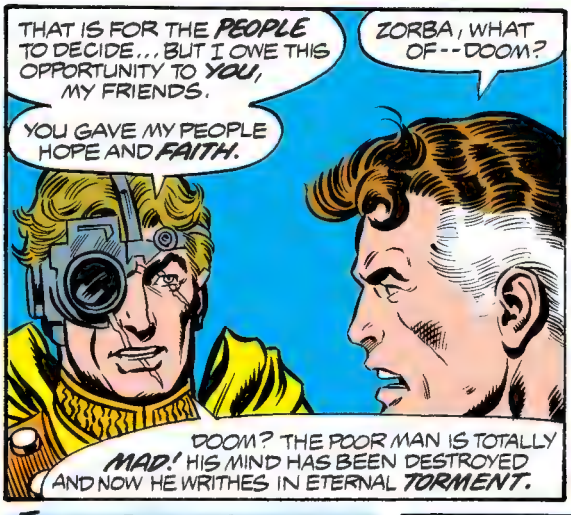
BUT--
THAT VIEW SCREEN-- I'VE BEEN A FOOL! ALL THE WHILE WE BATTLED, DOOM'S STATUE HAS BEEN FORCING THE U.N. DELEGATES TO DESTROY MY FRIENDS.
I CAN ONLY PRAY THEY CAN BE STOPPED IN TIME.

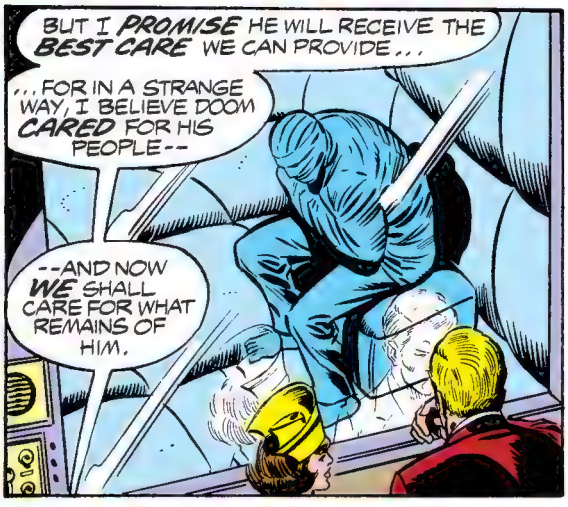
UNERRINGLY, THE MASTER SCIENTIST ANALYZES THE COMPUTER CONSOLE AND ACTIVATES--
--WHAT IS EVIDENTALLY THE CORRECT SWITCH.
BLIMEY! WOT 'AVE I BEEN DOING?
ALLAH! I AM AWAKENING FROM A NIGHTMARE!

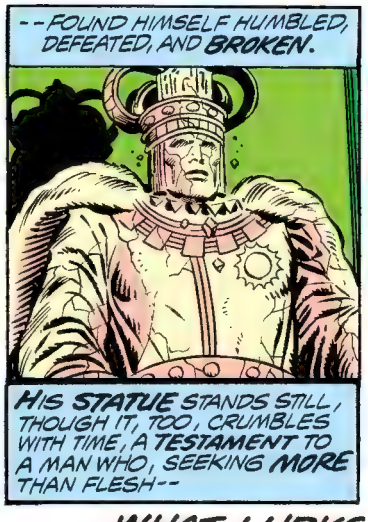
SUSIE--LOOK! THEY STOPPED, AN' THEIR BABY-BLUES LOOK NORMAL AGAIN.
THANK HEAVEN, BEN... MY FORCE-FIELD WOULDN'T HAVE HELD OUT A SECOND MORE.
REED MUST HAVE WON... HE WON!

EPILOGUE: LATVERIA: A NATION ANEW!


YOU HAVE EARNED MY GREATEST THANKS... LATVERIA IS NOW A FREE NATION AMONG OTHERS.
AS HEIR TO RUDOLFO, OUR LATE KING, I AM ITS LEADER...
...UNTIL THE ELECTIONS ARE HELD NEXT MONTH.
CONGRATULATIONS, ZORBA. I KNOW YOU WILL RULE WISELY.


THAT IS FOR THE PEOPLE TO DECIDE... BUT I OWE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO YOU, MY FRIENDS.
YOU GAVE MY PEOPLE HOPE AND FAITH.
ZORBA, WHAT OF--DOOM?
DOOM? THE POOR MAN IS TOTALLY MAD! HIS MIND HAS BEEN DESTROYED AND NOW HE WRITHES IN ETERNAL TORMENT.


BUT I PROMISE HE WILL RECEIVE THE BEST CARE WE CAN PROVIDE...
...FOR IN A STRANGE WAY, I BELIEVE DOOM CARED FOR HIS PEOPLE--
--AND NOW WE SHALL CARE FOR WHAT REMAINS OF HIM.


--FOUND HIMSELF HUMBLED, DEFEATED, AND BROKEN.
HIS STATUE STANDS STILL, THOUGH IT, TOO, CRUMBLES WITH TIME, A TESTAMENT TO A MAN WHO, SEEKING MORE THAN FLESH--

NEXT ISSUE: A NEW DAY DAWNS AS THE F.F. RETURN TO N.Y.

WHAT LURKS WITHIN THE BAXTER BUILDING?

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FANTASTIC FOUR
FOAM SNUFFS FLAME!
4 DOOMS TO DESTROY THE F.F.!
SPORE "X" KILLS!
LASERS LASH OUT!
GRAVITY GOES WILD!
POLLARD-SINNOTT

A brilliant scientist— his best friend— the woman he loves— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human!

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HOME SWEET HOME!

THE SOUND OF **FREEDOM** RINGS THROUGHOUT THE FORMERLY OPPRESSED NATION OF LATVERIA; CHEERFUL SHOUTING VOICES ARE SWEETENED WITH HAPPINESS AND CONTENTMENT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN **MEMORY.**

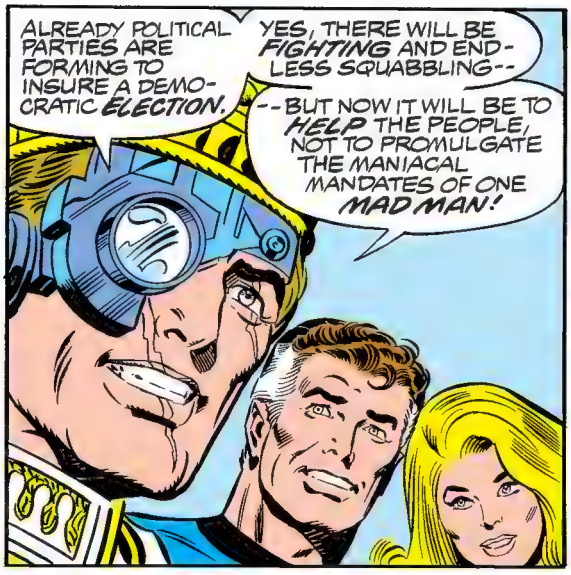
THE DESPOT, DOCTOR DOOM, HAS BEEN **DISPOSED.** AND IN HIS PLACE RULES...

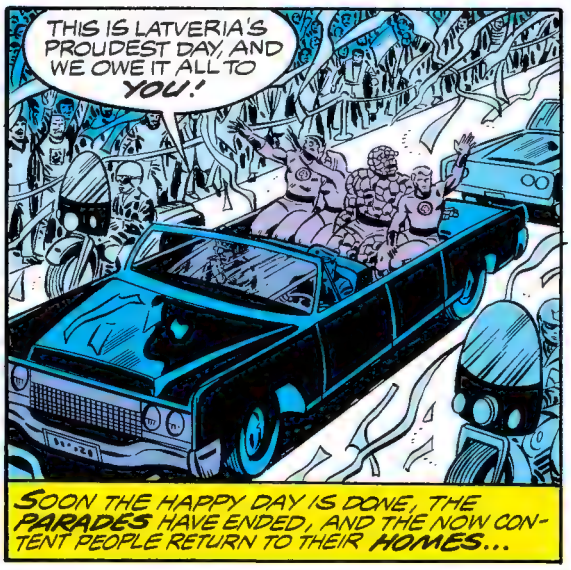
ZORBA! I CAN'T REMEMBER WHEN I LAST SAW THESE PEOPLE SO **JOYOUS!**

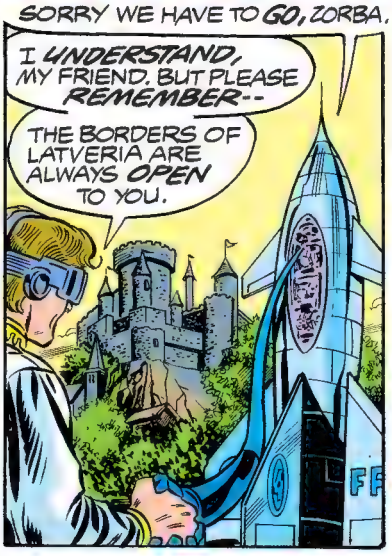
IT IS ALL BECAUSE OF **YOU,** MY FRIENDS.

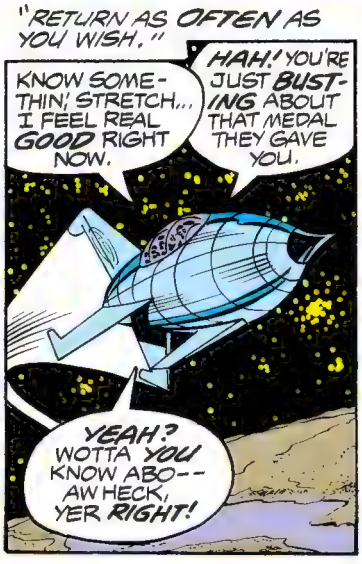
YOU **DEFEATED** DOOM AND RESTORED **DEMOCRACY** TO THE PERSECUTED PEOPLE OF LATVERIA.

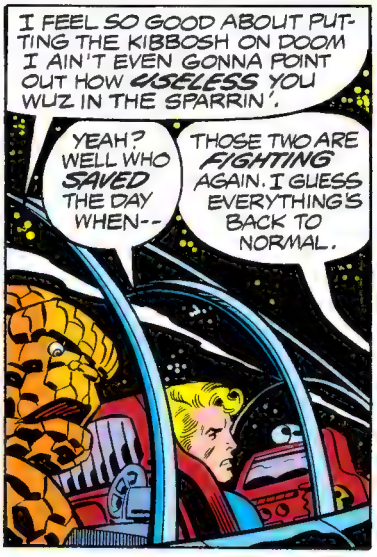
THERE IS NO WAY WE WILL EVER FORGET THE **FANTASTIC FOUR!**

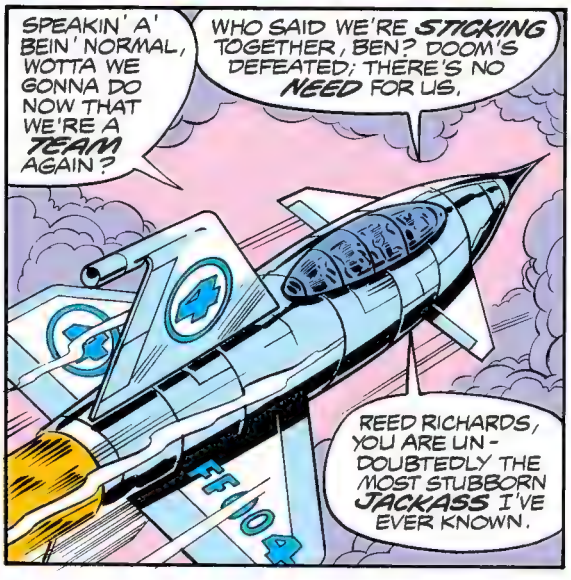

ALREADY POLITICAL PARTIES ARE FORMING TO INSURE A DEMOCRATIC ELECTION.
YES, THERE WILL BE FIGHTING AND ENDLESS SQUABBLING--
--BUT NOW IT WILL BE TO HELP THE PEOPLE, NOT TO PROMULGATE THE MANIACAL MANDATES OF ONE MAD MAN!

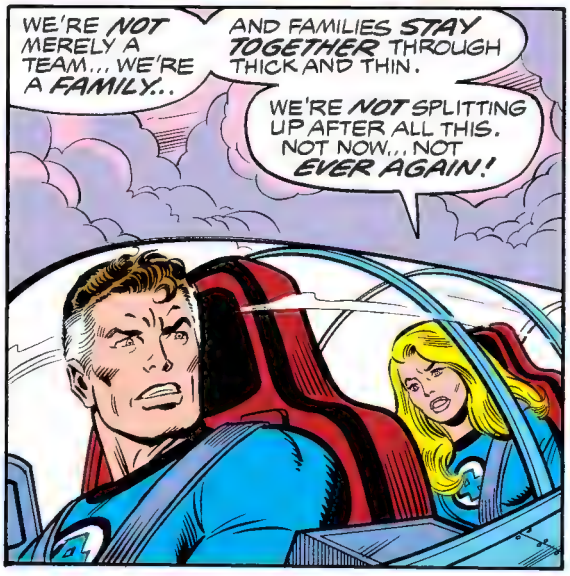

THIS IS LATVERIA'S PROUDEST DAY, AND WE OWE IT ALL TO YOU!
SOON THE HAPPY DAY IS DONE, THE PARADES HAVE ENDED, AND THE NOW CONTENT PEOPLE RETURN TO THEIR HOMES...

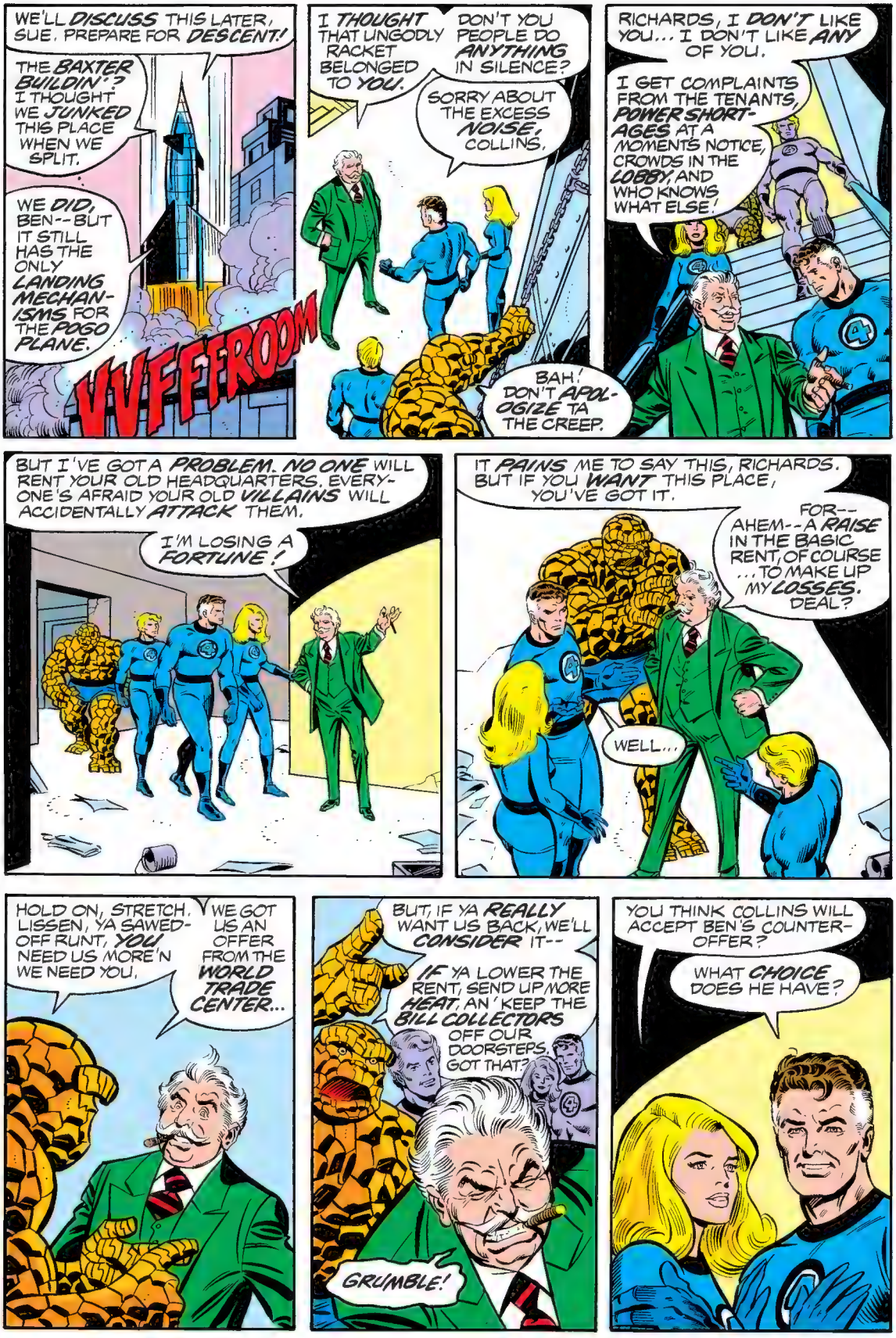

SORRY WE HAVE TO GO, ZORBA.
I UNDERSTAND, MY FRIEND. BUT PLEASE REMEMBER--
THE BORDERS OF LATVERIA ARE ALWAYS OPEN TO YOU.

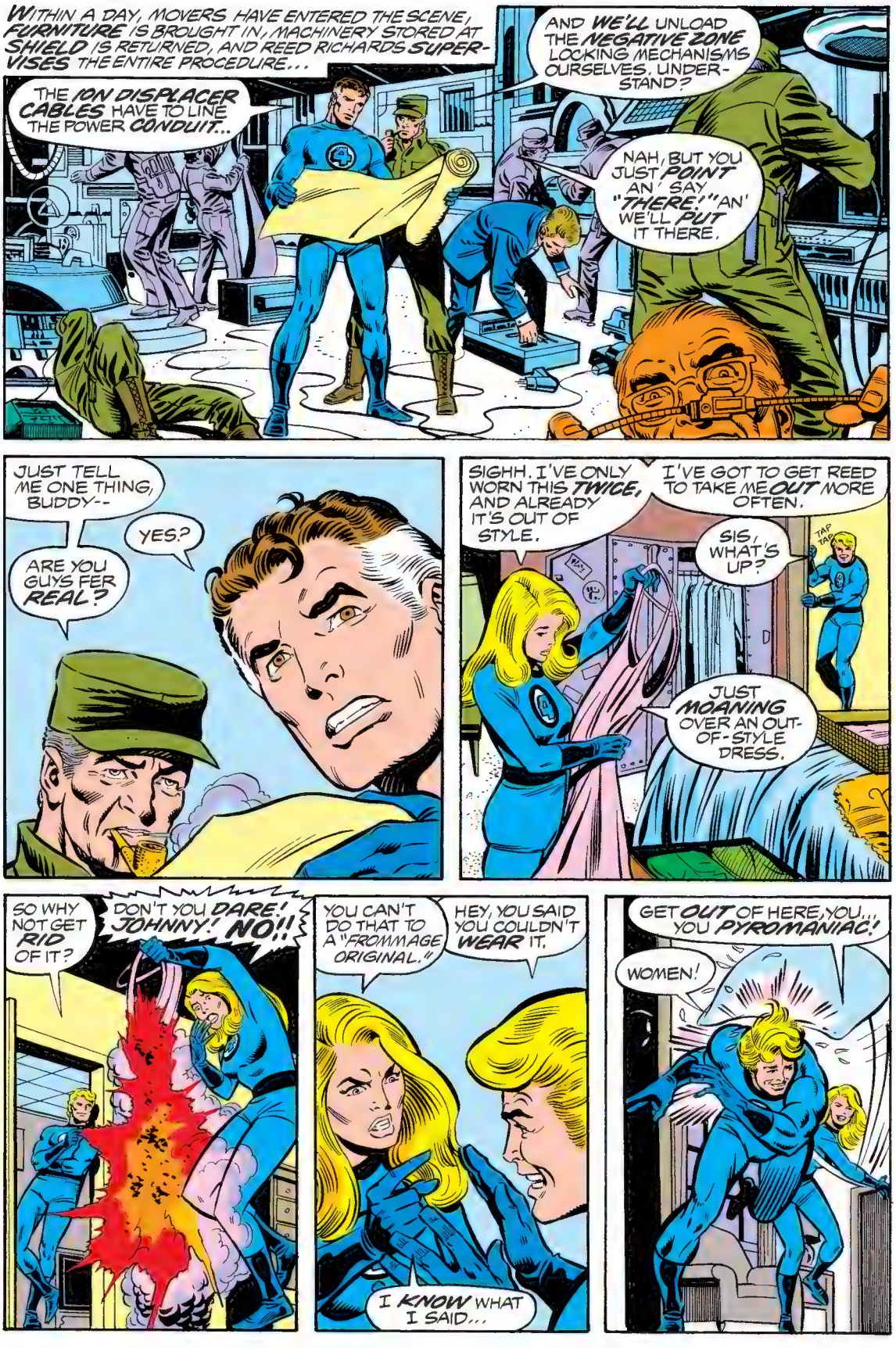

"RETURN AS OFTEN AS YOU WISH."
KNOW SOMETHIN', STRETCH... I FEEL REAL GOOD RIGHT NOW.
HAH! YOU'RE JUST BUSTING ABOUT THAT MEDAL THEY GAVE YOU.
YEAH? WOTTA YOU KNOW ABO-- AW HECK, YER RIGHT!

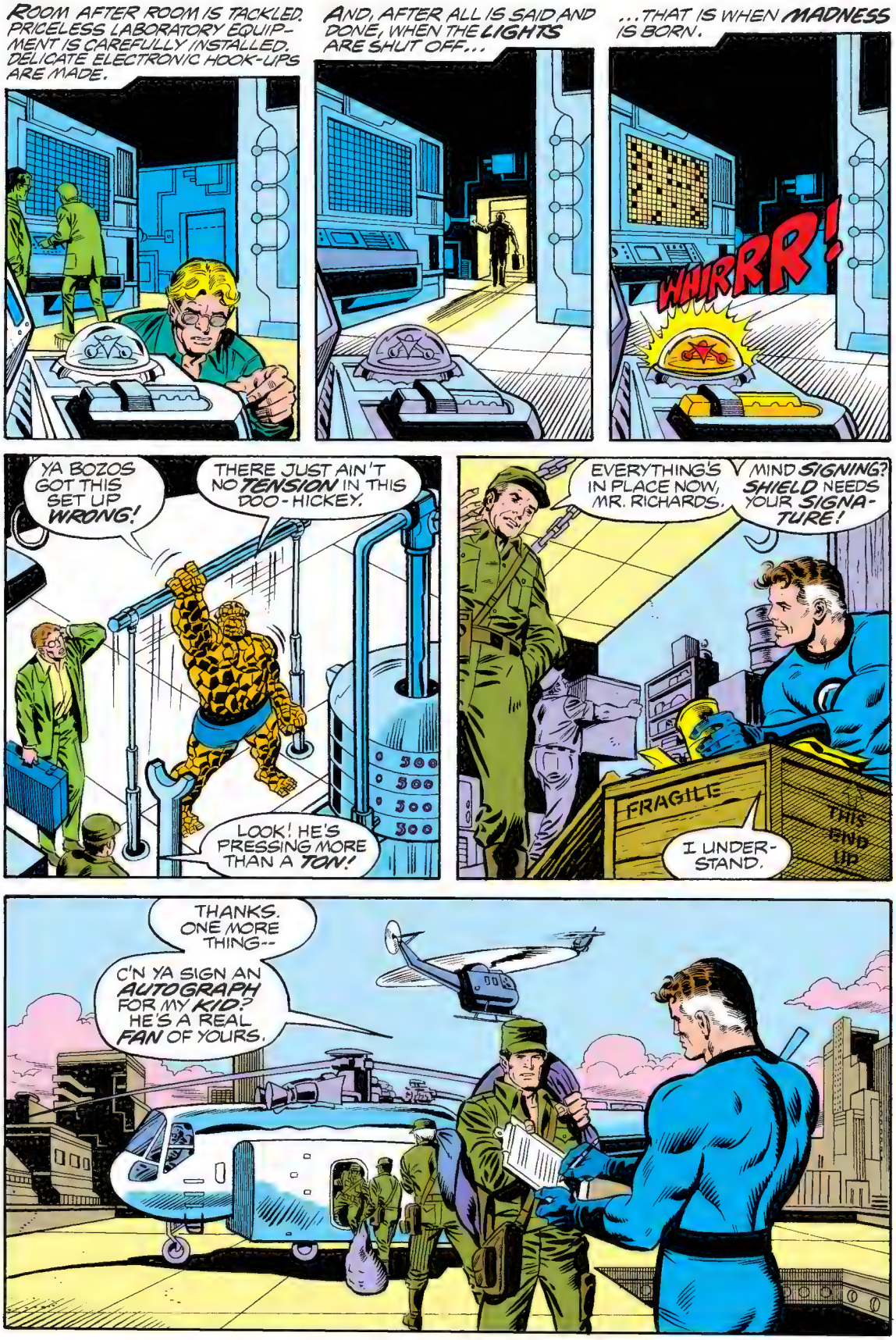

I FEEL SO GOOD ABOUT PUTTING THE KIBBOSH ON DOOM I AIN'T EVEN GONNA POINT OUT HOW USELESS YOU WUZ IN THE SPARRIN'.
YEAH? WELL WHO SAVED THE DAY WHEN--
THOSE TWO ARE FIGHTING AGAIN. I GUESS EVERYTHING'S BACK TO NORMAL.

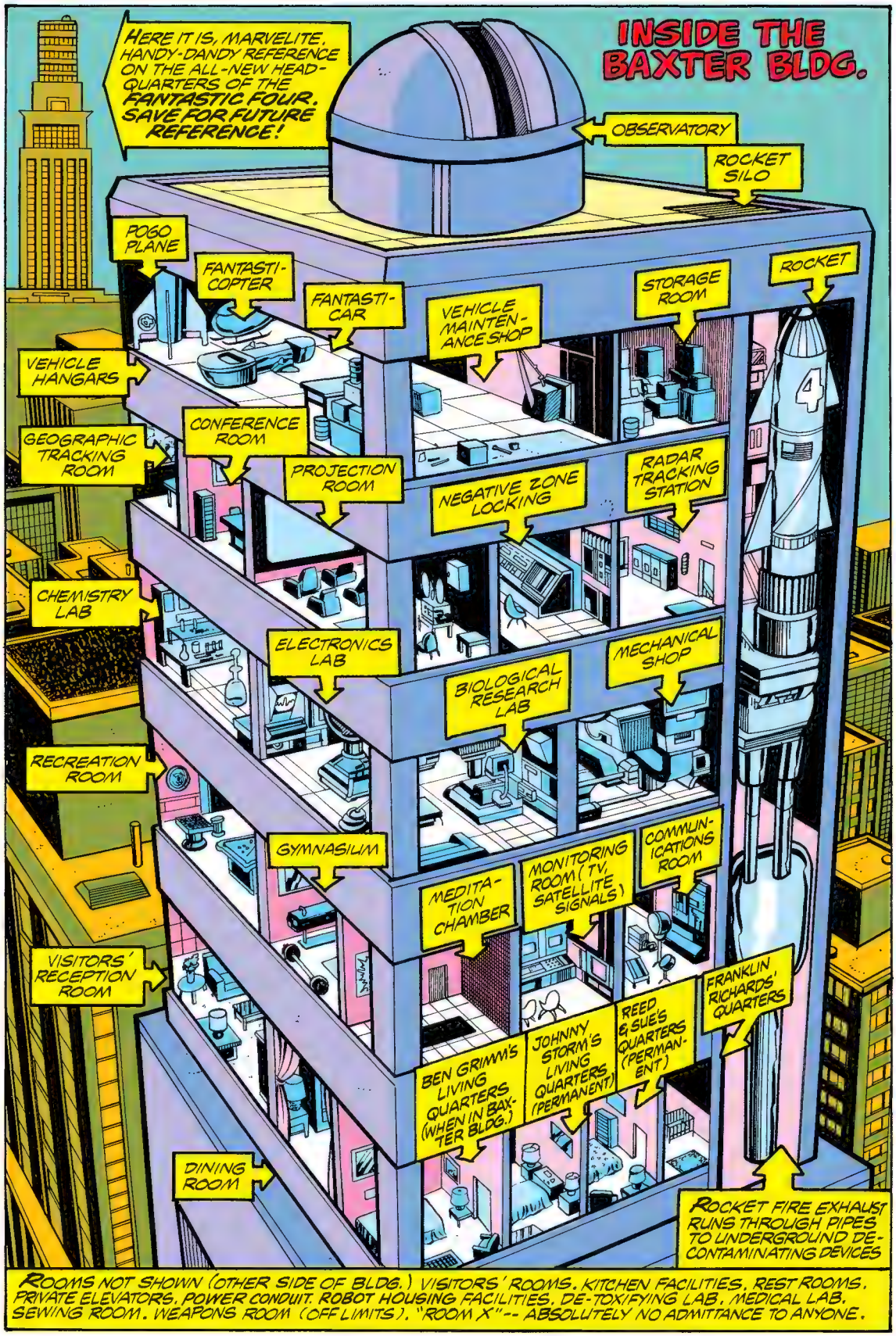

SPEAKIN' A' BEIN' NORMAL, WOTTA WE GONNA DO NOW THAT WE'RE A TEAM AGAIN?
WHO SAID WE'RE STICKING TOGETHER, BEN? DOOM'S DEFEATED; THERE'S NO NEED FOR US.
REED RICHARDS, YOU ARE UNDOUBTEDLY THE MOST STUBBORN JACKASS I'VE EVER KNOWN.

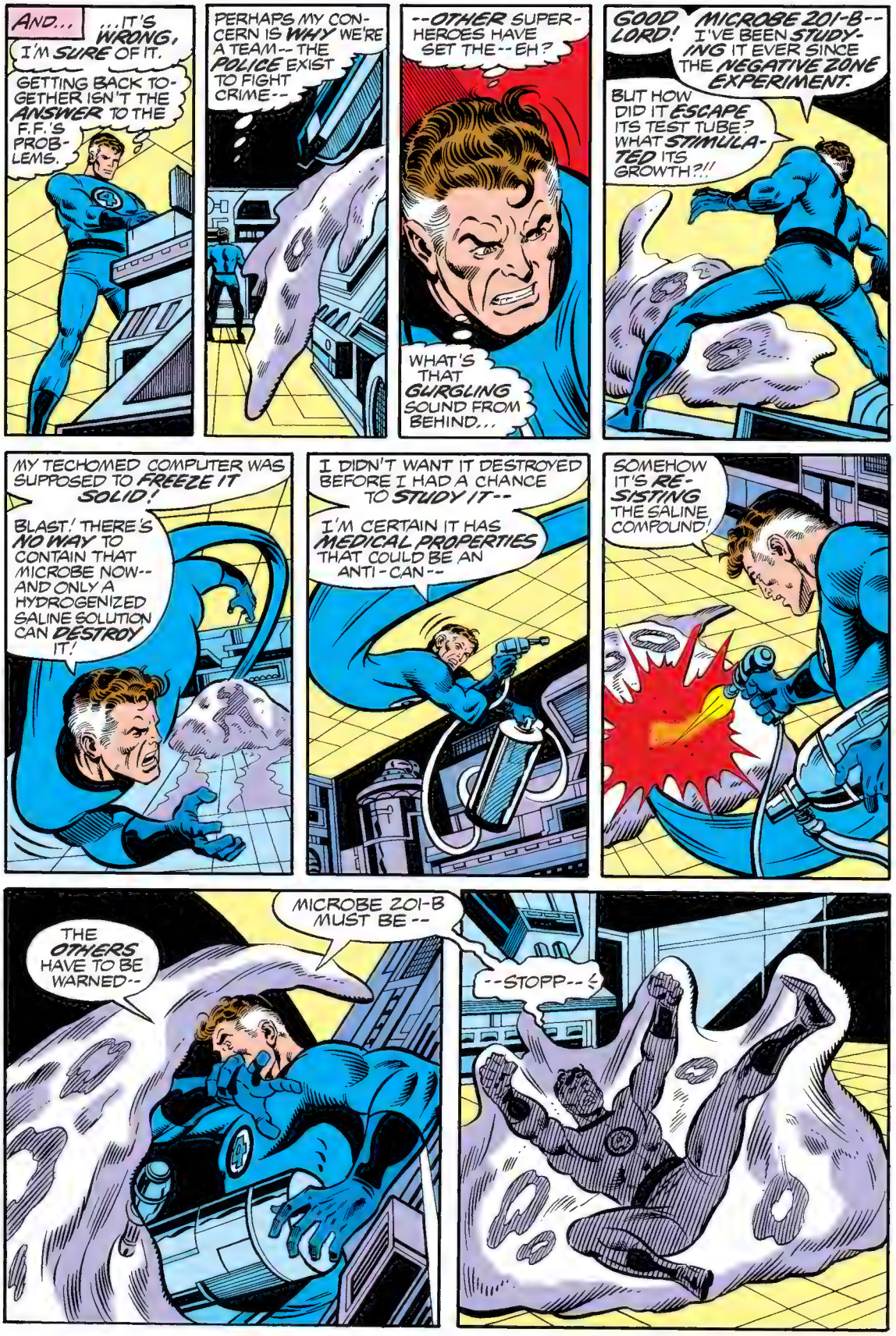

WE'RE NOT MERELY A TEAM... WE'RE A FAMILY..
AND FAMILIES STAY TOGETHER THROUGH THICK AND THIN.
WE'RE NOT SPLITTING UP AFTER ALL THIS. NOT NOW... NOT EVER AGAIN!

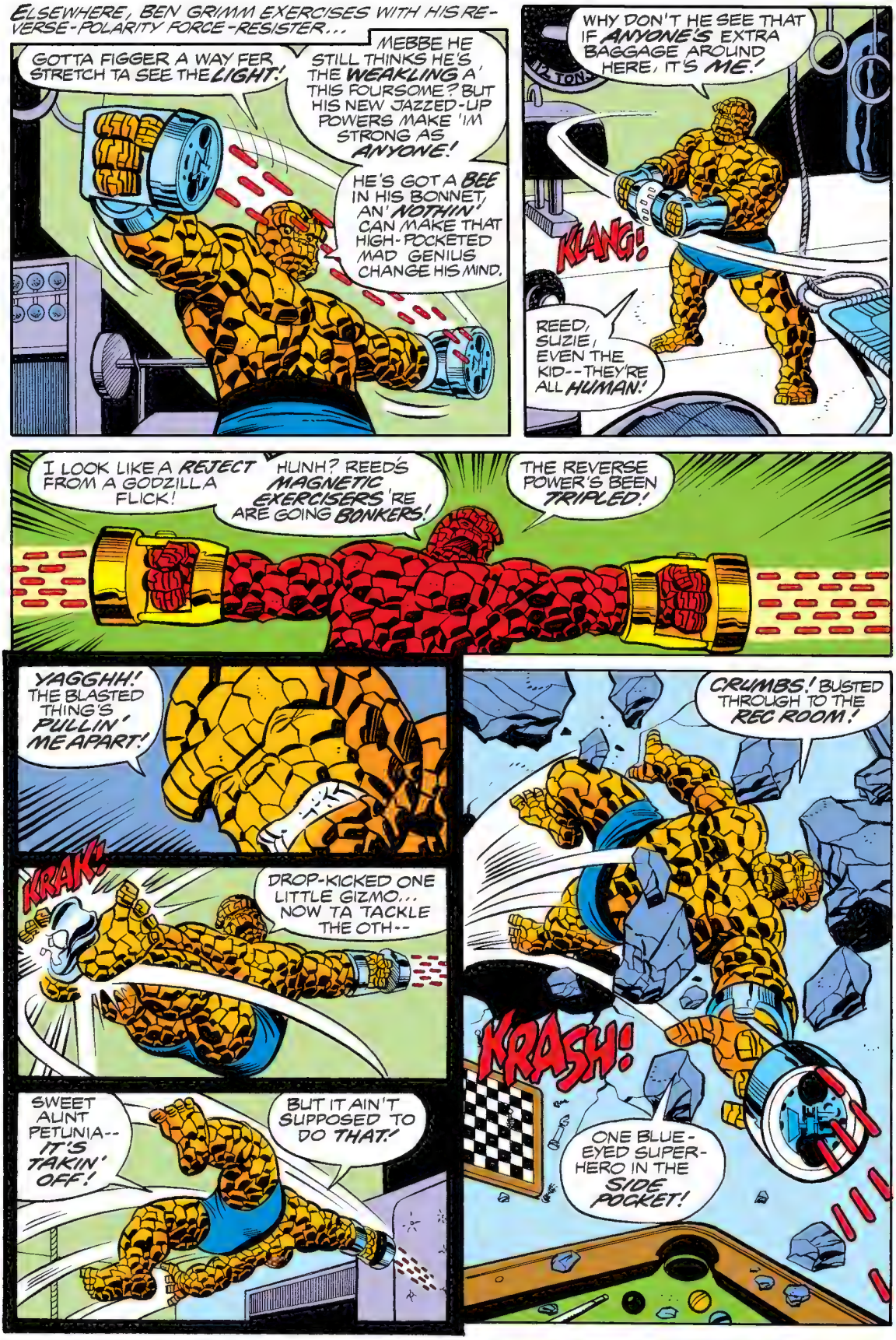

WE'LL DISCUSS THIS LATER, SUE. PREPARE FOR DESCENT!
THE BAXTER BUILDIN'? I THOUGHT WE JUNKED THIS PLACE WHEN WE SPLIT.
WE DID, BEN--BUT IT STILL HAS THE ONLY LANDING MECHANISMS FOR THE POGO PLANE.
VVFFFROOM
I THOUGHT THAT UNGODLY RACKET BELONGED TO YOU.
DON'T YOU PEOPLE DO ANYTHING IN SILENCE?
SORRY ABOUT THE EXCESS NOISE, COLLINS.
BAH! DON'T APOLOGIZE TA THE CREEP.
RICHARDS, I DON'T LIKE YOU... I DON'T LIKE ANY OF YOU.
I GET COMPLAINTS FROM THE TENANTS, POWER SHORTAGES AT A MOMENTS NOTICE, CROWDS IN THE LOBBY, AND WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE!
BUT I'VE GOT A PROBLEM. NO ONE WILL RENT YOUR OLD HEADQUARTERS. EVERYONE'S AFRAID YOUR OLD VILLAINS WILL ACCIDENTALLY ATTACK THEM.
I'M LOSING A FORTUNE!
IT PAINS ME TO SAY THIS, RICHARDS. BUT IF YOU WANT THIS PLACE, YOU'VE GOT IT.
FOR--AHEM--A RAISE IN THE BASIC RENT, OF COURSE ...TO MAKE UP MY LOSSES. DEAL?
WELL...
HOLD ON, STRETCH. LISSEN, YA SAWED-OFF RUNT, YOU NEED US MORE'N WE NEED YOU.
WE GOT US AN OFFER FROM THE WORLD TRADE CENTER...
BUT, IF YA REALLY WANT US BACK, WE'LL CONSIDER IT--
IF YA LOWER THE RENT, SEND UP MORE HEAT, AN' KEEP THE BILL COLLECTORS OFF OUR DOORSTEPS, GOT THAT?
GRUMBLE!
YOU THINK COLLINS WILL ACCEPT BEN'S COUNTER-OFFER?
WHAT CHOICE DOES HE HAVE?

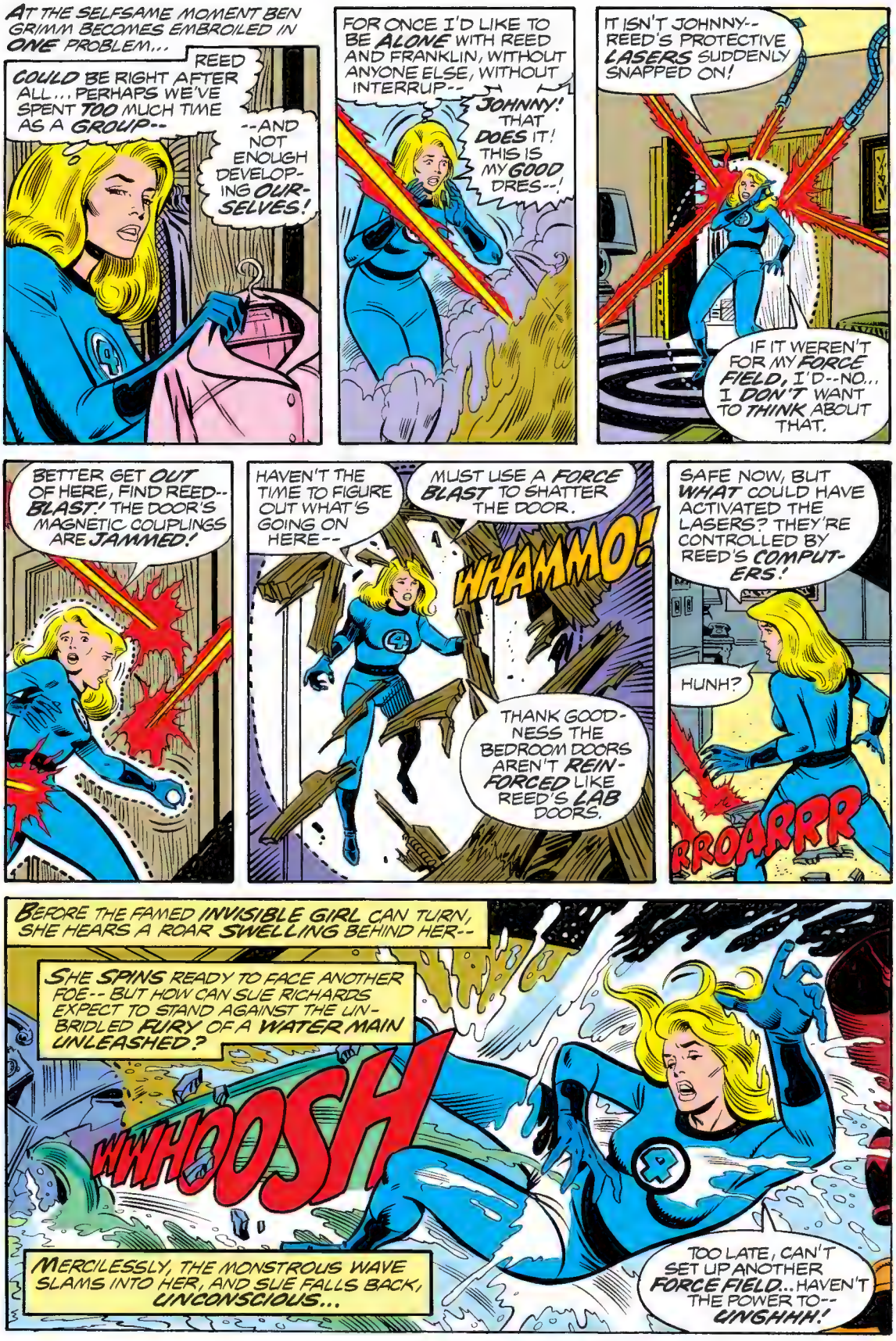

WITHIN A DAY, MOVERS HAVE ENTERED THE SCENE, FURNITURE IS BROUGHT IN, MACHINERY STORED AT SHIELD IS RETURNED, AND REED RICHARDS SUPERVISES THE ENTIRE PROCEDURE...
THE ION DISPLACER CABLES HAVE TO LINE THE POWER CONDUIT...
AND WE'LL UNLOAD THE NEGATIVE ZONE LOCKING MECHANISMS OURSELVES, UNDERSTAND?
NAH, BUT YOU JUST POINT AN' SAY "THERE!" AN' WE'LL PUT IT THERE.
JUST TELL ME ONE THING, BUDDY--
YES?
ARE YOU GUYS FER REAL?
SIGHH. I'VE ONLY WORN THIS TWICE, AND ALREADY IT'S OUT OF STYLE.
I'VE GOT TO GET REED TO TAKE ME OUT MORE OFTEN.
SIS, WHAT'S UP?
TAP TAP
JUST MOANING OVER AN OUT-OF-STYLE DRESS.
SO WHY NOT GET RID OF IT?
DON'T YOU DARE! JOHNNY! NO!!
YOU CAN'T DO THAT TO A "FROMMAGE ORIGINAL."
HEY, YOU SAID YOU COULDN'T WEAR IT.
I KNOW WHAT I SAID...
GET OUT OF HERE, YOU... YOU PYROMANIAC!
WOMEN!

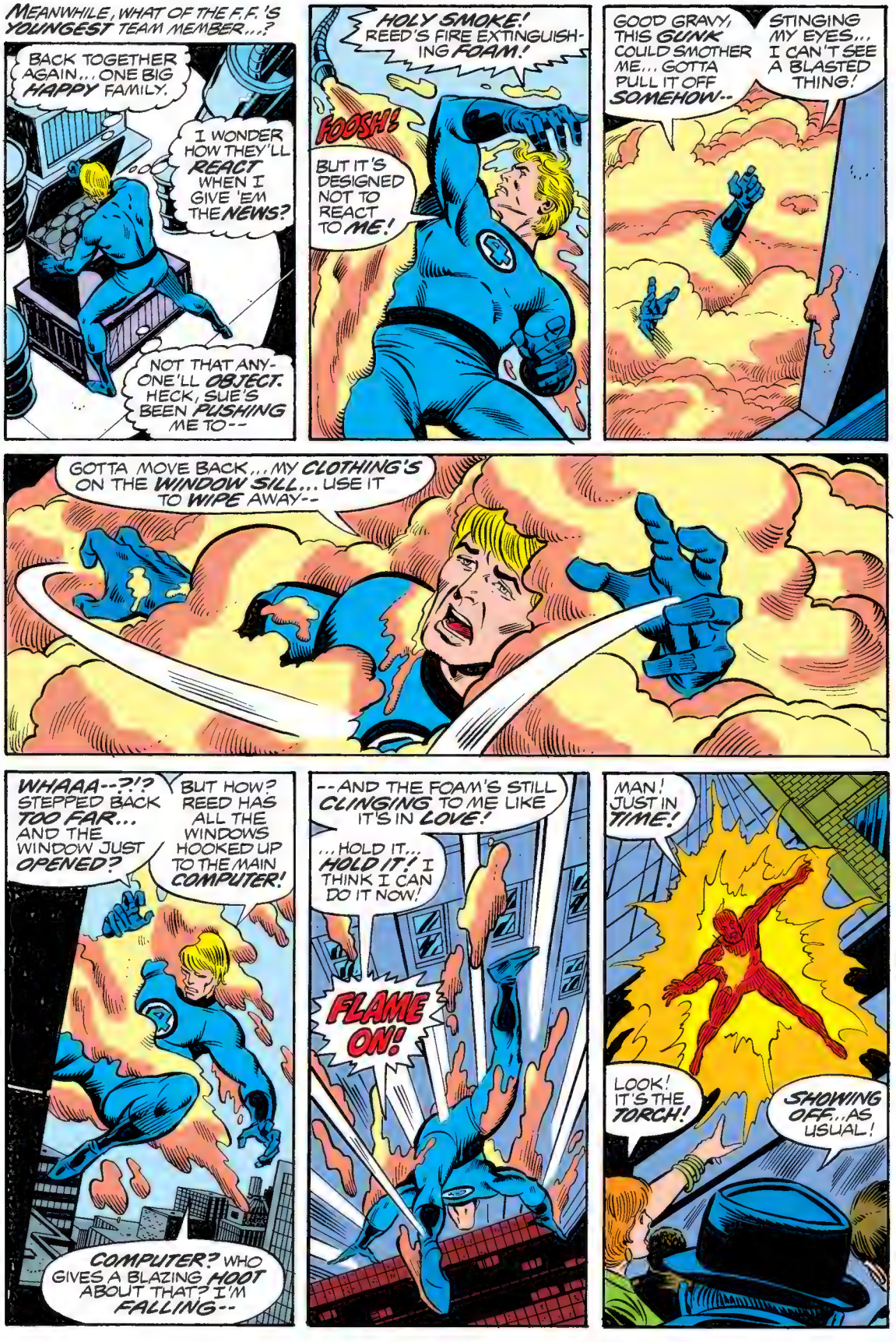

ROOM AFTER ROOM IS TACKLED. PRICELESS LABORATORY EQUIPMENT IS CAREFULLY INSTALLED. DELICATE ELECTRONIC HOOK-UPS ARE MADE.
AND, AFTER ALL IS SAID AND DONE, WHEN THE LIGHTS ARE SHUT OFF...
...THAT IS WHEN MADNESS IS BORN.
WHIRRR!
YA BOZOS GOT THIS SET UP WRONG!
THERE JUST AIN'T NO TENSION IN THIS DOO-HICKEY.
LOOK! HE'S PRESSING MORE THAN A TON!
EVERYTHING'S IN PLACE NOW, MR. RICHARDS.
MIND SIGNING? SHIELD NEEDS YOUR SIGNATURE!
FRAGILE
THIS END UP
I UNDERSTAND.
THANKS. ONE MORE THING--
C'N YA SIGN AN AUTOGRAPH FOR MY KID? HE'S A REAL FAN OF YOURS.

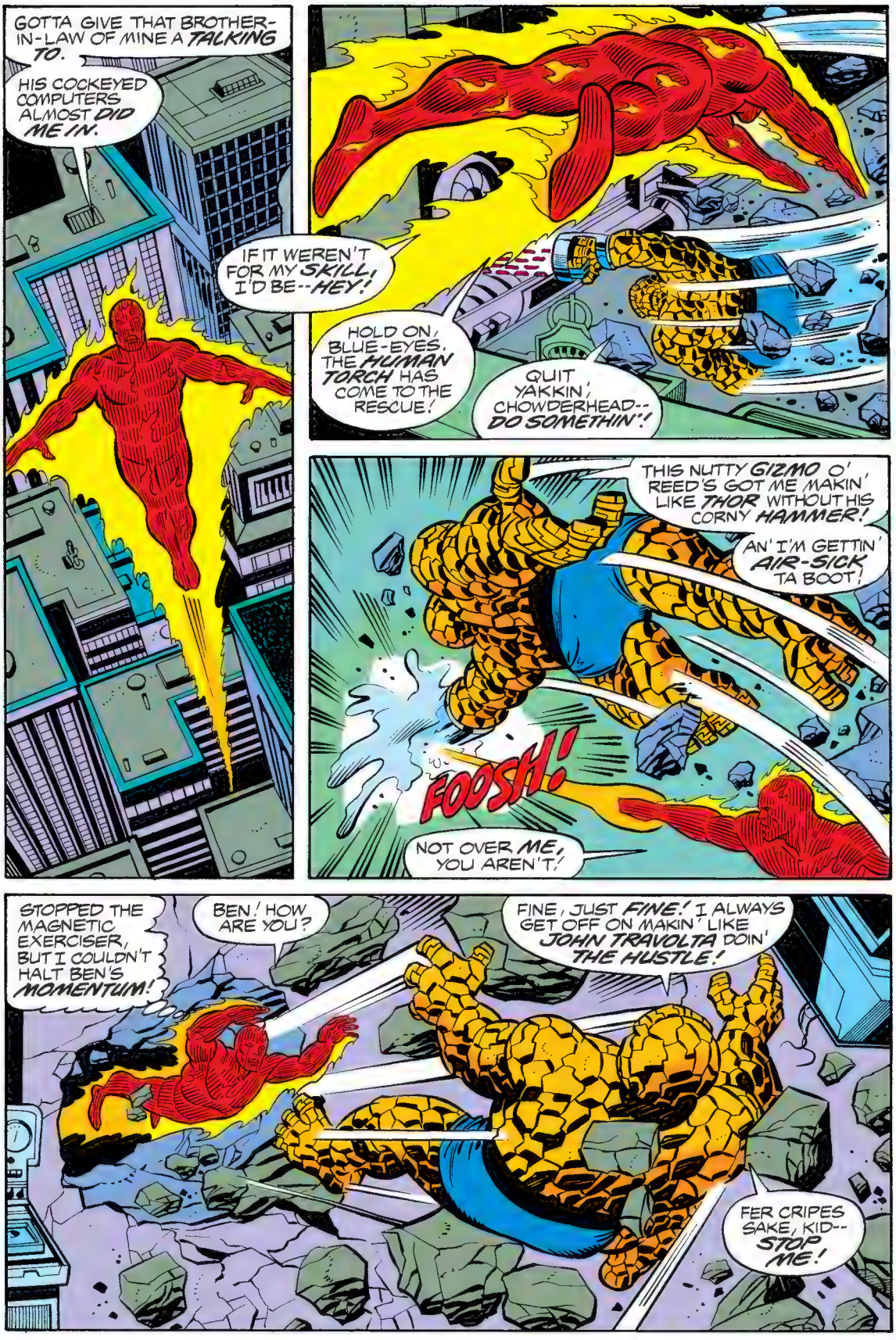

HERE IT IS, MARVELITE. HANDY-DANDY REFERENCE ON THE ALL-NEW HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR. SAVE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE!
INSIDE THE BAXTER BLDG.
OBSERVATORY
ROCKET SILO
POGO PLANE
FANTASTI-COPTER
FANTASTI-CAR
VEHICLE MAINTEN-ANCE SHOP
STORAGE ROOM
ROCKET
VEHICLE HANGARS
CONFERENCE ROOM
GEOGRAPHIC TRACKING ROOM
PROJECTION ROOM
NEGATIVE ZONE LOCKING
RADAR TRACKING STATION
CHEMISTRY LAB
ELECTRONICS LAB
BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH LAB
MECHANICAL SHOP
RECREATION ROOM
GYMNASIUM
MEDITA-TION CHAMBER
MONITORING ROOM (TV, SATELLITE SIGNALS)
COMMUN-ICATIONS ROOM
VISITORS' RECEPTION ROOM
FRANKLIN RICHARDS' QUARTERS
REED & SUE'S QUARTERS (PERMAN-ENT)
JOHNNY STORM'S LIVING QUARTERS (PERMANENT)
BEN GRIMM'S LIVING QUARTERS (WHEN IN BAX-TER BLDG.)
DINING ROOM
ROCKET FIRE EXHAUST RUNS THROUGH PIPES TO UNDERGROUND DE-CONTAMINATING DEVICES
ROOMS NOT SHOWN (OTHER SIDE OF BLDG.) VISITORS' ROOMS. KITCHEN FACILITIES. REST ROOMS. PRIVATE ELEVATORS. POWER CONDUIT. ROBOT HOUSING FACILITIES. DE-TOXIFYING LAB. MEDICAL LAB. SEWING ROOM. WEAPONS ROOM (OFF LIMITS). "ROOM X" -- ABSOLUTELY NO ADMITTANCE TO ANYONE.

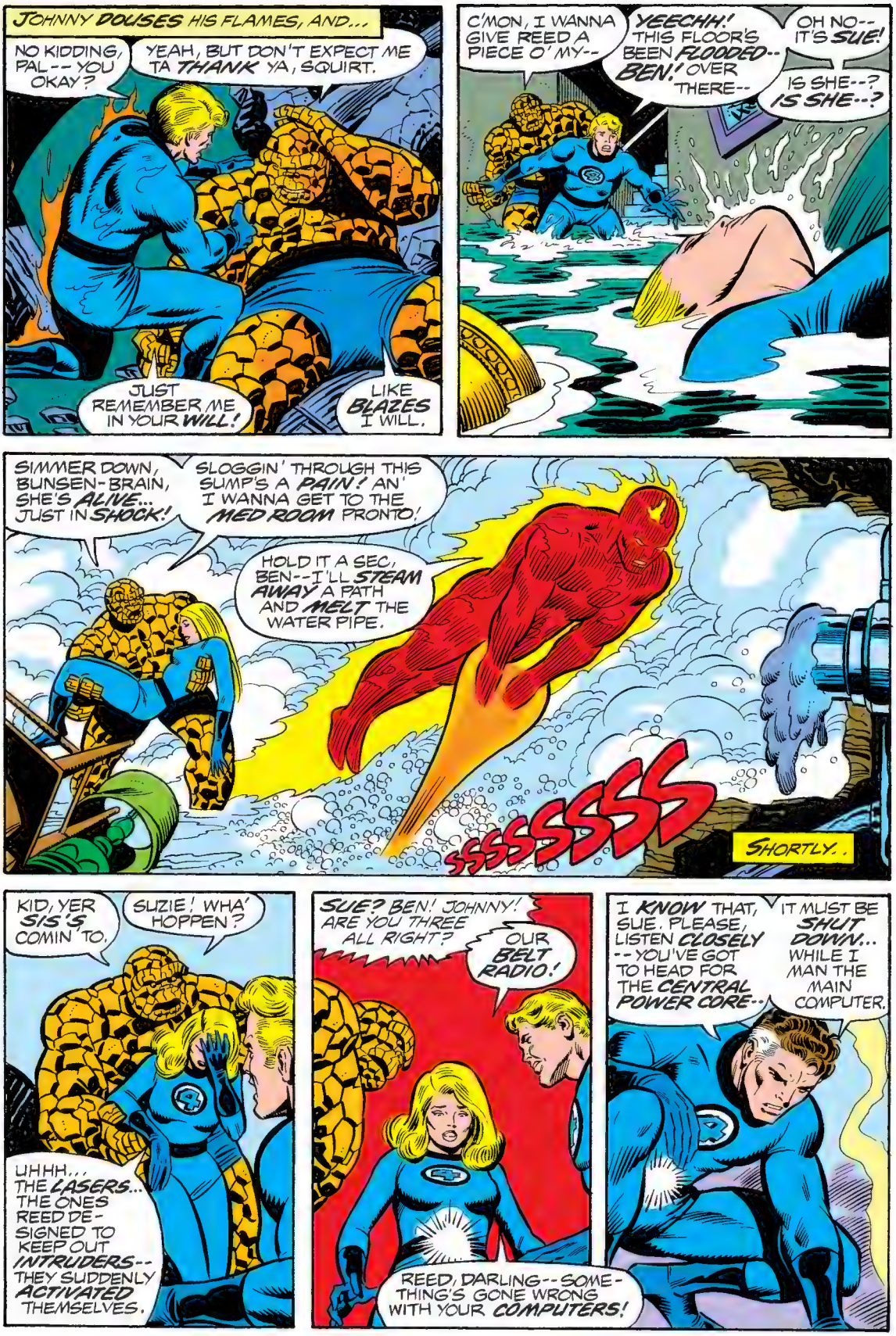

AND...
...IT'S WRONG,
I'M SURE OF IT.
GETTING BACK TOGETHER ISN'T THE ANSWER TO THE F.F.'S PROBLEMS.
PERHAPS MY CONCERN IS WHY WE'RE A TEAM-- THE POLICE EXIST TO FIGHT CRIME--
--OTHER SUPERHEROES HAVE SET THE--EH?
WHAT'S THAT GURGLING SOUND FROM BEHIND...
GOOD LORD!
MICROBE 201-B-- I'VE BEEN STUDYING IT EVER SINCE THE NEGATIVE ZONE EXPERIMENT.
BUT HOW DID IT ESCAPE ITS TEST TUBE? WHAT STIMULATED ITS GROWTH?!!
MY TECHOMED COMPUTER WAS SUPPOSED TO FREEZE IT SOLID!
BLAST! THERE'S NO WAY TO CONTAIN THAT MICROBE NOW-- AND ONLY A HYDROGENIZED SALINE SOLUTION CAN DESTROY IT!
I DIDN'T WANT IT DESTROYED BEFORE I HAD A CHANCE TO STUDY IT--
I'M CERTAIN IT HAS MEDICAL PROPERTIES THAT COULD BE AN ANTI-CAN--
SOMEHOW IT'S RESISTING THE SALINE COMPOUND!
THE OTHERS HAVE TO BE WARNED--
MICROBE 201-B MUST BE--
--STOPP--


ELSEWHERE, BEN GRIMM EXERCISES WITH HIS REVERSE-POLARITY FORCE-RESISTER...
GOTTA FIGGER A WAY FER STRETCH TA SEE THE LIGHT!
MEBBE HE STILL THINKS HE'S THE WEAKLING A' THIS FOURSOME? BUT HIS NEW JAZZED-UP POWERS MAKE 'IM STRONG AS ANYONE!
HE'S GOT A BEE IN HIS BONNET, AN' NOTHIN' CAN MAKE THAT HIGH-POCKETED MAD GENIUS CHANGE HIS MIND.
WHY DON'T HE SEE THAT IF ANYONE'S EXTRA BAGGAGE AROUND HERE, IT'S ME!
KLANG!
REED, SUZIE, EVEN THE KID--THEY'RE ALL HUMAN!
I LOOK LIKE A REJECT FROM A GODZILLA FLICK!
HUNH? REED'S MAGNETIC EXERCISERS 'RE ARE GOING BONKERS!
THE REVERSE POWER'S BEEN TRIPLED!
YAGGHH! THE BLASTED THING'S PULLIN' ME APART!
KRAK!
DROP-KICKED ONE LITTLE GIZMO... NOW TA TACKLE THE OTH--
SWEET AUNT PETUNIA--IT'S TAKIN' OFF!
BUT IT AIN'T SUPPOSED TO DO THAT!
CRUMBS! BUSTED THROUGH TO THE REC ROOM!
KRASH!
ONE BLUE-EYED SUPER-HERO IN THE SIDE POCKET!

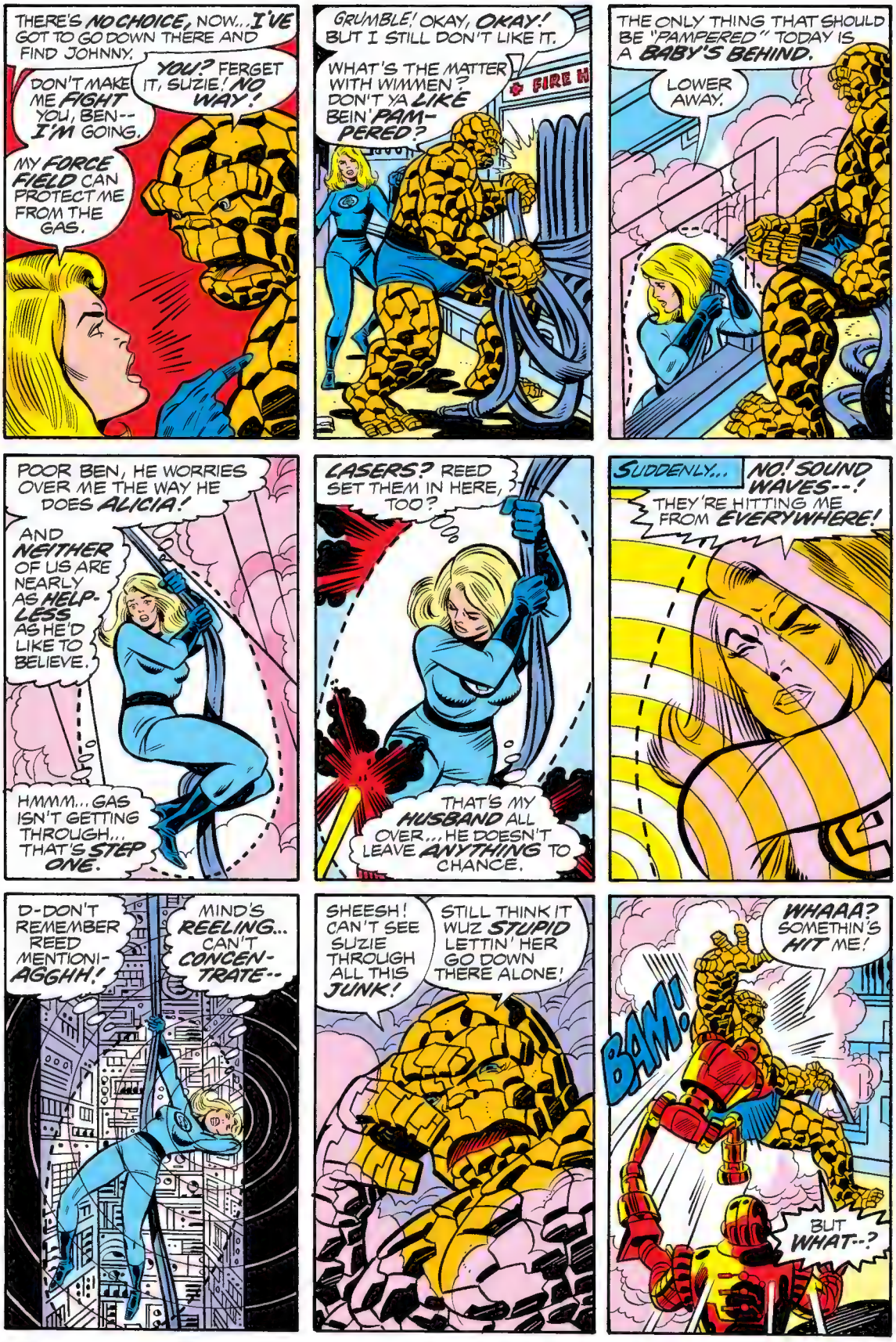

AT THE SELFSAME MOMENT BEN GRIMM BECOMES EMBROILED IN ONE PROBLEM...
REED COULD BE RIGHT AFTER ALL... PERHAPS WE'VE SPENT TOO MUCH TIME AS A GROUP--
--AND NOT ENOUGH DEVELOPING OURSELVES!
FOR ONCE I'D LIKE TO BE ALONE WITH REED AND FRANKLIN, WITHOUT ANYONE ELSE, WITHOUT INTERRUP--
JOHNNY! THAT DOES IT! THIS IS MY GOOD DRES--!
IT ISN'T JOHNNY-- REED'S PROTECTIVE LASERS SUDDENLY SNAPPED ON!
IF IT WEREN'T FOR MY FORCE FIELD, I'D--NO... I DON'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT THAT.
BETTER GET OUT OF HERE, FIND REED-- BLAST! THE DOOR'S MAGNETIC COUPLINGS ARE JAMMED!
HAVEN'T THE TIME TO FIGURE OUT WHAT'S GOING ON HERE--
MUST USE A FORCE BLAST TO SHATTER THE DOOR.
WHAMMO!
THANK GOODNESS THE BEDROOM DOORS AREN'T REINFORCED LIKE REED'S LAB DOORS.
SAFE NOW, BUT WHAT COULD HAVE ACTIVATED THE LASERS? THEY'RE CONTROLLED BY REED'S COMPUTERS!
HUNH?
RROARRR
BEFORE THE FAMED INVISIBLE GIRL CAN TURN, SHE HEARS A ROAR SWELLING BEHIND HER--
SHE SPINS READY TO FACE ANOTHER FOE-- BUT HOW CAN SUE RICHARDS EXPECT TO STAND AGAINST THE UNBRIDLED FURY OF A WATER MAIN UNLEASHED?
WHOOSH
MERCILESSLY, THE MONSTROUS WAVE SLAMS INTO HER, AND SUE FALLS BACK, UNCONSCIOUS...
TOO LATE, CAN'T SET UP ANOTHER FORCE FIELD... HAVEN'T THE POWER TO-- UNGHHH!

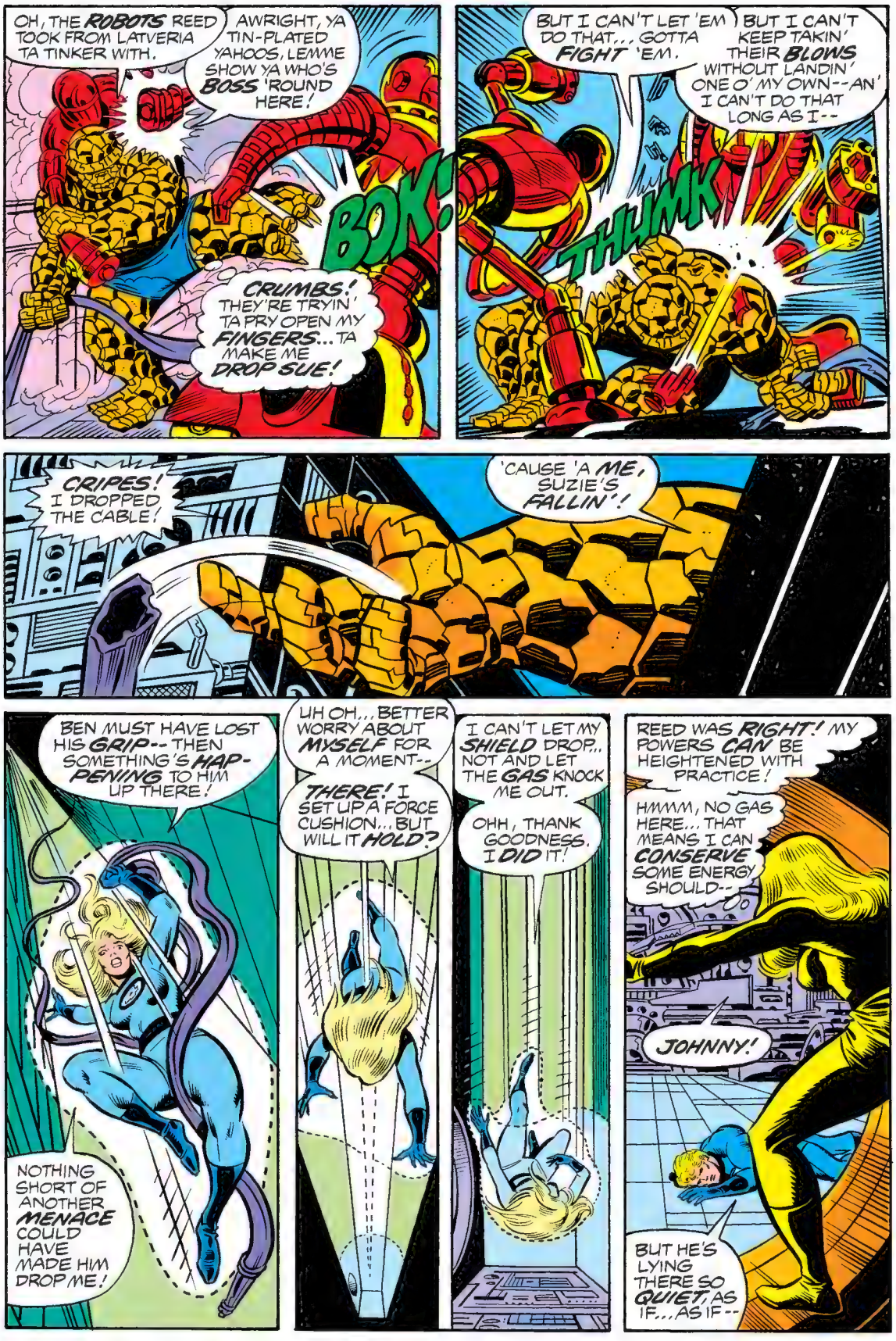

MEANWHILE, WHAT OF THE F.F.'S YOUNGEST TEAM MEMBER...?
BACK TOGETHER AGAIN... ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY.
I WONDER HOW THEY'LL REACT WHEN I GIVE 'EM THE NEWS?
NOT THAT ANY-ONE'LL OBJECT. HECK, SUE'S BEEN PUSHING ME TO--
HOLY SMOKE! REED'S FIRE EXTINGUISH-ING FOAM!
FOOSH!
BUT IT'S DESIGNED NOT TO REACT TO ME!
GOOD GRAVY, THIS GUNK COULD SMOTHER ME... GOTTA PULL IT OFF SOMEHOW--
STINGING MY EYES... I CAN'T SEE A BLASTED THING!
GOTTA MOVE BACK... MY CLOTHING'S ON THE WINDOW SILL... USE IT TO WIPE AWAY--
WHAAA--?!? STEPPED BACK TOO FAR... AND THE WINDOW JUST OPENED?
BUT HOW? REED HAS ALL THE WINDOWS HOOKED UP TO THE MAIN COMPUTER!
COMPUTER? WHO GIVES A BLAZING HOOT ABOUT THAT? I'M FALLING--
--AND THE FOAM'S STILL CLINGING TO ME LIKE IT'S IN LOVE!
...HOLD IT... HOLD IT! I THINK I CAN DO IT NOW!
FLAME ON!
MAN! JUST IN TIME!
LOOK! IT'S THE TORCH!
SHOWING OFF... AS USUAL!

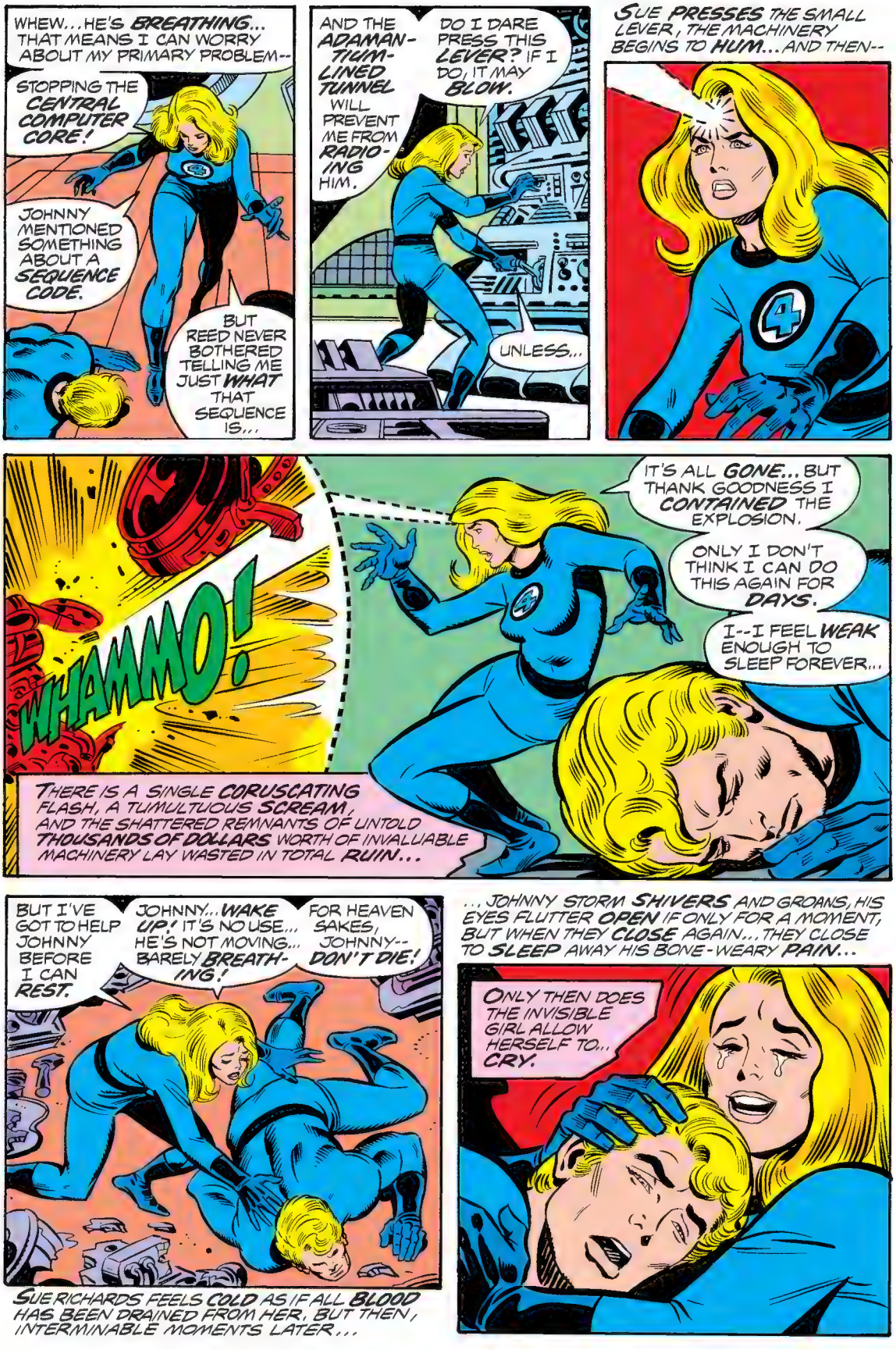

GOTTA GIVE THAT BROTHER-IN-LAW OF MINE A TALKING TO.
HIS COCKEYED COMPUTERS ALMOST DID ME IN.
IF IT WEREN'T FOR MY SKILL, I'D BE--HEY!
HOLD ON, BLUE-EYES, THE HUMAN TORCH HAS COME TO THE RESCUE!
QUIT YAKKIN', CHOWDERHEAD--DO SOMETHIN'!
THIS NUTTY GIZMO O' REED'S GOT ME MAKIN' LIKE THOR WITHOUT HIS CORNY HAMMER!
AN' I'M GETTIN' AIR-SICK TA BOOT!
FOOSH!
NOT OVER ME, YOU AREN'T!
STOPPED THE MAGNETIC EXERCISER, BUT I COULDN'T HALT BEN'S MOMENTUM!
BEN! HOW ARE YOU?
FINE, JUST FINE! I ALWAYS GET OFF ON MAKIN' LIKE JOHN TRAVOLTA DOIN' THE HUSTLE!
FER CRIPES SAKE, KID--STOP ME!

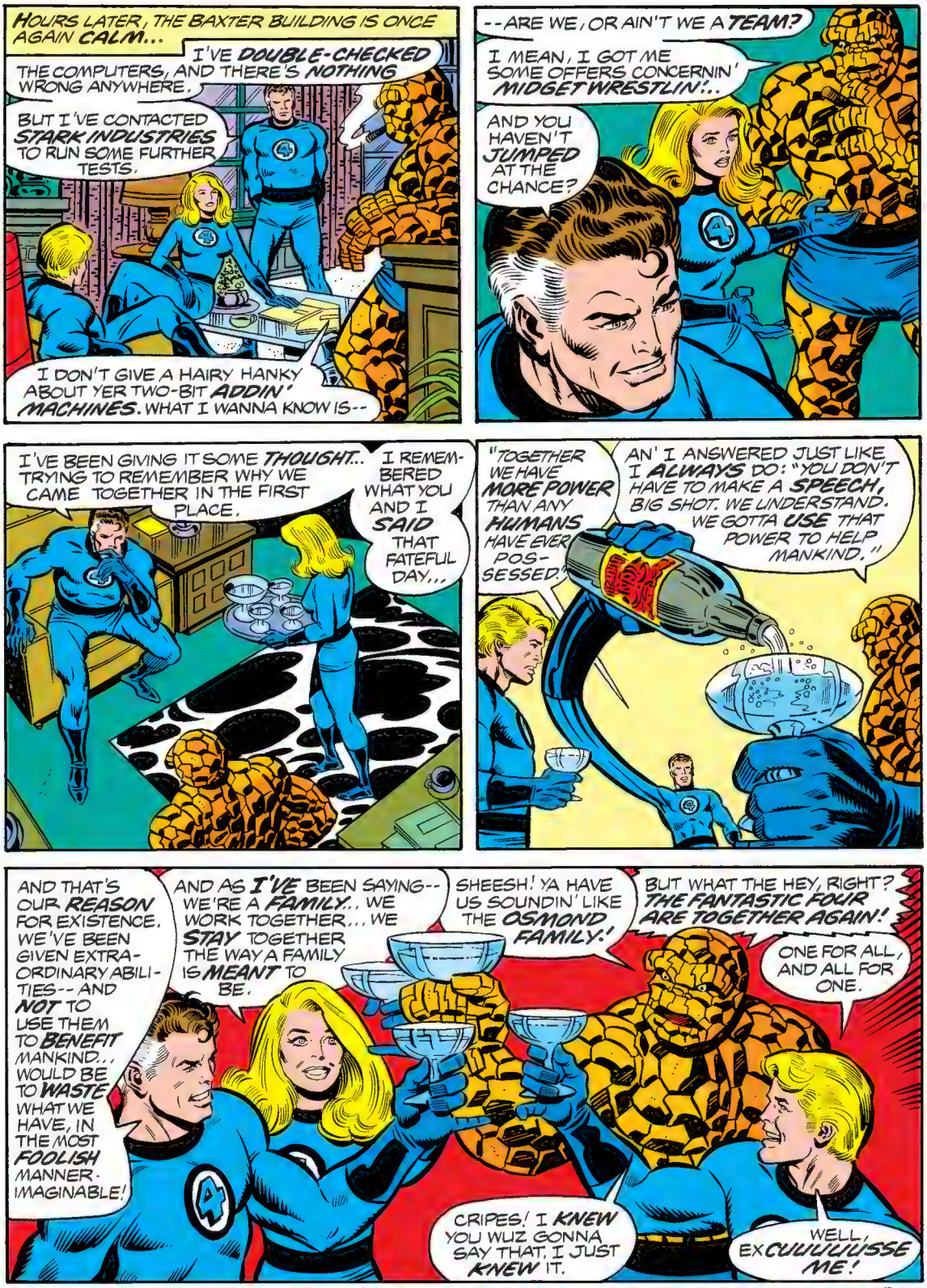

JOHNNY DOUSES HIS FLAMES, AND...
NO KIDDING, PAL--YOU OKAY?
YEAH, BUT DON'T EXPECT ME TA THANK YA, SQUIRT.
JUST REMEMBER ME IN YOUR WILL!
LIKE BLAZES I WILL.
C'MON, I WANNA GIVE REED A PIECE O' MY--
YEECHH! THIS FLOOR'S BEEN FLOODED-- BEN! OVER THERE--
OH NO-- IT'S SUE!
IS SHE--? IS SHE--?
SIMMER DOWN, BUNSEN-BRAIN, SHE'S ALIVE... JUST IN SHOCK!
SLOGGIN' THROUGH THIS SUMP'S A PAIN! AN' I WANNA GET TO THE MED ROOM PRONTO!
HOLD IT A SEC, BEN--I'LL STEAM AWAY A PATH AND MELT THE WATER PIPE.
SSSSSSSS
SHORTLY..
KID, YER SIS'S COMIN' TO.
SUZIE! WHA' HOPPEN?
UHHH... THE LASERS... THE ONES REED DE-SIGNED TO KEEP OUT INTRUDERS-- THEY SUDDENLY ACTIVATED THEMSELVES.
SUE? BEN! JOHNNY! ARE YOU THREE ALL RIGHT?
OUR BELT RADIO!
REED, DARLING--SOME-THING'S GONE WRONG WITH YOUR COMPUTERS!
I KNOW THAT, SUE. PLEASE, LISTEN CLOSELY --YOU'VE GOT TO HEAD FOR THE CENTRAL POWER CORE--
IT MUST BE SHUT DOWN... WHILE I MAN THE MAIN COMPUTER.

JOHNNY, YOU'RE THE BEST MAN FOR THE JOB--BE CAREFUL, SON.
REMEMBER WE INSTALLED SEVERAL PROTECTIVE DEVICES ALONG THE TUNNEL. WATCH OUT FOR THEM ALL.
YOU UNDERSTAND ALL THAT?
YOU GOT IT, BOSS MAN.
WHO'D THOUGHT AFTER PUTTING THE KIBBOSH ON DOC DOOM, WE'D BE BUSTIN' UP THE BAXTER BUILDIN'?!!
THERE'S THE ACCESS TO THE CENTRAL CORE.
I WELDED IT SHUT MYSELF... TO PREVENT IT FROM BEING OPENED!
WELDED, SHMELDED!
WHEN YA GOT THE POWER OF THE EVER-LOVIN' BLUE-EYED THING--
--NOTHIN' CAN STOP YA. NOTHIN'!
SKUNCH
STAND BACK! I'LL GET TO THE CORE IN A JIFF!
IT'S A GOOD THING I HELPED REED INSTALL IT!
I KNOW THE EXACT SEQUENCE NECESSARY FOR DISABLING THE POWER CONDUITS.
GAS! I FORGOT THIS WAS THE FIRST ANTI-THEFT DEVICE--
REED'S SPECIAL FORMULA... CHOKE--IT'S ALREADY... CHOKE--NUMBING ME...
JOHNNY! YA HEAR ME, KID? ANSWER ME, YA BLAZIN' BOZO!
HE CAN'T! DON'T YOU SMELL IT?
IT'S GAS!


THERE'S NO CHOICE, NOW... I'VE GOT TO GO DOWN THERE AND FIND JOHNNY.
DON'T MAKE ME FIGHT YOU, BEN-- I'M GOING.
YOU? FERGET IT, SUZIE! NO WAY!
MY FORCE FIELD CAN PROTECT ME FROM THE GAS.
GRUMBLE! OKAY, OKAY! BUT I STILL DON'T LIKE IT.
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH WIMMEN? DON'T YA LIKE BEIN' PAMPERED?
FIRE H
THE ONLY THING THAT SHOULD BE "PAMPERED" TODAY IS A BABY'S BEHIND.
LOWER AWAY.
POOR BEN, HE WORRIES OVER ME THE WAY HE DOES ALICIA!
AND NEITHER OF US ARE NEARLY AS HELPLESS AS HE'D LIKE TO BELIEVE.
HMMM... GAS ISN'T GETTING THROUGH... THAT'S STEP ONE.
LASERS? REED SET THEM IN HERE, TOO?
THAT'S MY HUSBAND ALL OVER... HE DOESN'T LEAVE ANYTHING TO CHANCE.
SUDDENLY...
NO! SOUND WAVES--! THEY'RE HITTING ME FROM EVERYWHERE!
D-DON'T REMEMBER REED MENTIONI- AGGHH!
MIND'S REELING... CAN'T CONCENTRATE--
SHEESH! CAN'T SEE SUZIE THROUGH ALL THIS JUNK!
STILL THINK IT WUZ STUPID LETTIN' HER GO DOWN THERE ALONE!
WHAAA? SOMETHIN'S HIT ME!
BAM!
BUT WHAT--?


OH, THE ROBOTS REED TOOK FROM LATVERIA TA TINKER WITH.
AWRIGHT, YA TIN-PLATED YAHOOS, LEMME SHOW YA WHO'S BOSS 'ROUND HERE!
BOK!
CRUMBS! THEY'RE TRYIN' TA PRY OPEN MY FINGERS... TA MAKE ME DROP SUE!
BUT I CAN'T LET 'EM DO THAT... GOTTA FIGHT 'EM.
BUT I CAN'T KEEP TAKIN' THEIR BLOWS WITHOUT LANDIN' ONE O' MY OWN--AN' I CAN'T DO THAT LONG AS I--
THUMK
CRIPES! I DROPPED THE CABLE!
'CAUSE 'A ME, SUZIE'S FALLIN'!
BEN MUST HAVE LOST HIS GRIP-- THEN SOMETHING'S HAP-PENING TO HIM UP THERE!
NOTHING SHORT OF ANOTHER MENACE COULD HAVE MADE HIM DROP ME!
UH OH... BETTER WORRY ABOUT MYSELF FOR A MOMENT--
THERE! I SET UP A FORCE CUSHION... BUT WILL IT HOLD?
I CAN'T LET MY SHIELD DROP... NOT AND LET THE GAS KNOCK ME OUT.
OHH, THANK GOODNESS, I DID IT!
REED WAS RIGHT! MY POWERS CAN BE HEIGHTENED WITH PRACTICE!
HMMM, NO GAS HERE... THAT MEANS I CAN CONSERVE SOME ENERGY SHOULD--
JOHNNY!
BUT HE'S LYING THERE SO QUIET, AS IF... AS IF--


WHEW... HE'S BREATHING... THAT MEANS I CAN WORRY ABOUT MY PRIMARY PROBLEM--
STOPPING THE CENTRAL COMPUTER CORE!
JOHNNY MENTIONED SOMETHING ABOUT A SEQUENCE CODE.
BUT REED NEVER BOTHERED TELLING ME JUST WHAT THAT SEQUENCE IS...
AND THE ADAMANTIUM-LINED TUNNEL WILL PREVENT ME FROM RADIOING HIM.
DO I DARE PRESS THIS LEVER? IF I DO, IT MAY BLOW.
UNLESS...
SUE PRESSES THE SMALL LEVER, THE MACHINERY BEGINS TO HUM... AND THEN--
WHAMMO!
IT'S ALL GONE... BUT THANK GOODNESS I CONTAINED THE EXPLOSION.
ONLY I DON'T THINK I CAN DO THIS AGAIN FOR DAYS.
I--I FEEL WEAK ENOUGH TO SLEEP FOREVER...
THERE IS A SINGLE CORUSCATING FLASH, A TUMULTUOUS SCREAM, AND THE SHATTERED REMNANTS OF UNTOLD THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF INVALUABLE MACHINERY LAY WASTED IN TOTAL RUIN...
BUT I'VE GOT TO HELP JOHNNY BEFORE I CAN REST.
JOHNNY... WAKE UP! IT'S NO USE... HE'S NOT MOVING... BARELY BREATHING!
FOR HEAVEN SAKES, JOHNNY-- DON'T DIE!
SUE RICHARDS FEELS COLD AS IF ALL BLOOD HAS BEEN DRAINED FROM HER. BUT THEN, INTERMINABLE MOMENTS LATER...
... JOHNNY STORM SHIVERS AND GROANS, HIS EYES FLUTTER OPEN IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT, BUT WHEN THEY CLOSE AGAIN... THEY CLOSE TO SLEEP AWAY HIS BONE-WEARY PAIN...
ONLY THEN DOES THE INVISIBLE GIRL ALLOW HERSELF TO... CRY.


HOURS LATER, THE BAXTER BUILDING IS ONCE AGAIN CALM...
I'VE DOUBLE-CHECKED THE COMPUTERS, AND THERE'S NOTHING WRONG ANYWHERE.
BUT I'VE CONTACTED STARK INDUSTRIES TO RUN SOME FURTHER TESTS.
I DON'T GIVE A HAIRY HANKY ABOUT YER TWO-BIT ADDIN' MACHINES. WHAT I WANNA KNOW IS--
--ARE WE, OR AIN'T WE A TEAM?
I MEAN, I GOT ME SOME OFFERS CONCERNIN' MIDGET WRESTLIN'...
AND YOU HAVEN'T JUMPED AT THE CHANCE?
I'VE BEEN GIVING IT SOME THOUGHT... TRYING TO REMEMBER WHY WE CAME TOGETHER IN THE FIRST PLACE.
I REMEMBERED WHAT YOU AND I SAID THAT FATEFUL DAY...
"TOGETHER WE HAVE MORE POWER THAN ANY HUMANS HAVE EVER POSSESSED."
AN' I ANSWERED JUST LIKE I ALWAYS DO: "YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE A SPEECH, BIG SHOT. WE UNDERSTAND. WE GOTTA USE THAT POWER TO HELP MANKIND."
AND THAT'S OUR REASON FOR EXISTENCE. WE'VE BEEN GIVEN EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES--AND NOT TO USE THEM TO BENEFIT MANKIND... WOULD BE TO WASTE WHAT WE HAVE, IN THE MOST FOOLISH MANNER IMAGINABLE!
AND AS I'VE BEEN SAYING--WE'RE A FAMILY... WE WORK TOGETHER... WE STAY TOGETHER THE WAY A FAMILY IS MEANT TO BE.
SHEESH! YA HAVE US SOUNDIN' LIKE THE OSMOND FAMILY!
BUT WHAT THE HEY, RIGHT? THE FANTASTIC FOUR ARE TOGETHER AGAIN!
ONE FOR ALL, AND ALL FOR ONE.
CRIPES! I KNEW YOU WUZ GONNA SAY THAT. I JUST KNEW IT.
WELL, EXCUUUUUSSE ME!
NEXT ISSUE:
YOU HAVEN'T GOT PROBLEMS TILL YOU'VE GOT--
ONE IRON MAN TOO MANY!

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MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! Now they are the FANTASTIC FOUR— and the world will never be the same again!

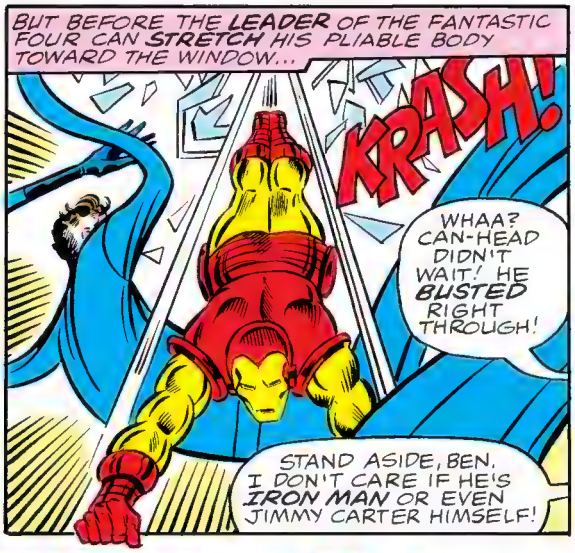
Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

MARV WOLFMAN WRITER/EDITOR / JOHN BUSCEMA & JOE SINNOTT ILLUSTRATORS / JIM NOVAK: LETTERER JANICE COHEN: COLORIST / JIM SHOOTER CON. ED.

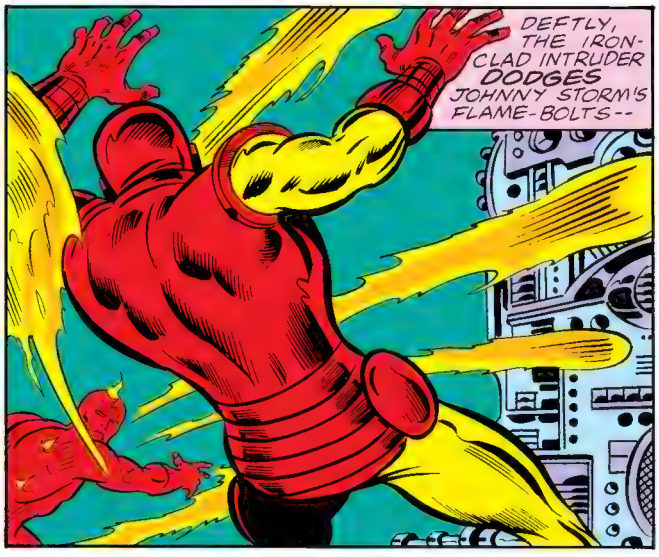
THERE'S ONE IRON MAN TOO MANY!

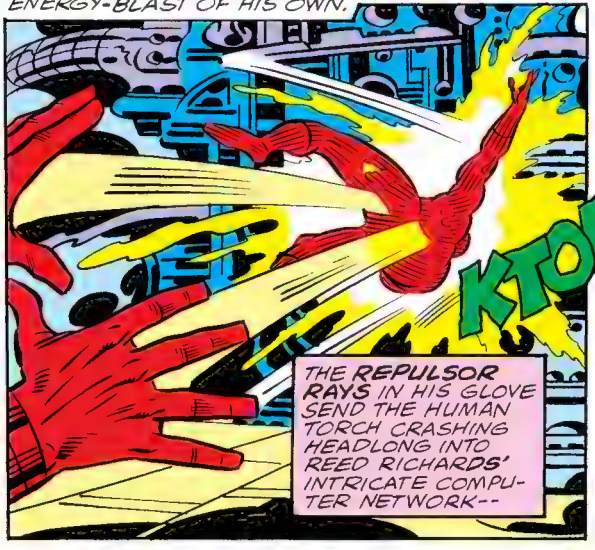
HAVING JUST RECLAIMED THE BAXTER BUILDING*, THE FANTASTIC FOUR SETTLE DOWN TO A HOPEFULLY QUIET AFTERNOON.
BOY, ARE THEY IN FOR A SURPRISE!
I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THE COMPUTERS WENT HAYWIRE--*
LOOK! IRON MAN IS HEADING THIS WAY!
WONDER WHAT HE WANTS HERE.
MEBBE HE HAS TA BORROW SOME RUST REMOVER!
GET RIDDA HIM QUICK, STRETCH. I JUST FOUND OUR SCRABBLE GAME!
*LAST ISSUE. --MARV W.

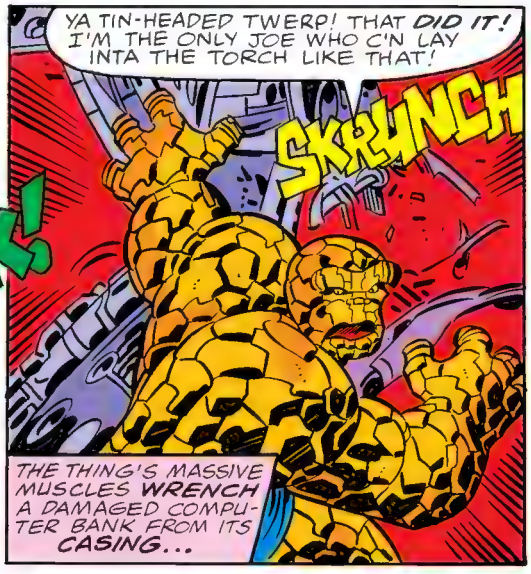
THAT WILL HAVE TO WAIT, BEN.
I'D BETTER OPEN THE WINDOW AND LET IN OUR GUEST!
IRON MAN WOULDN'T COME HERE WITHOUT CALLING UNLESS IT WAS IMPORTANT!


BUT BEFORE THE LEADER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR CAN STRETCH HIS PLIABLE BODY TOWARD THE WINDOW...
KRASH!
WHAA? CAN-HEAD DIDN'T WAIT! HE BUSTED RIGHT THROUGH!
STAND ASIDE, BEN. I DON'T CARE IF HE'S IRON MAN OR EVEN JIMMY CARTER HIMSELF!

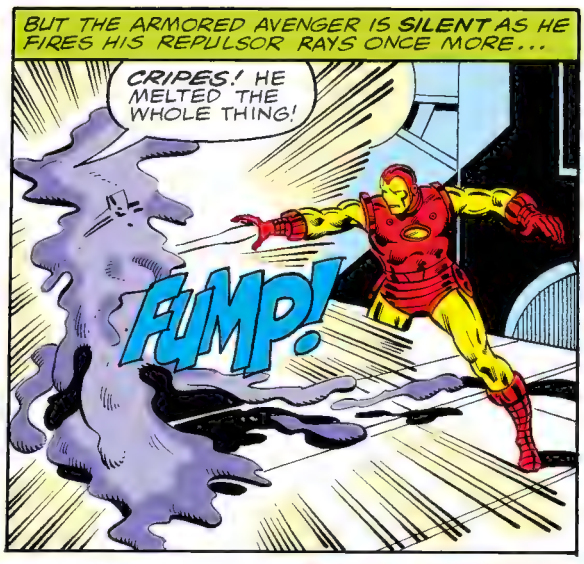
NO MAN CRASHES IN LIKE THAT--
--WITHOUT ANSWERING TO THE HUMAN TORCH!
FLAME ON!

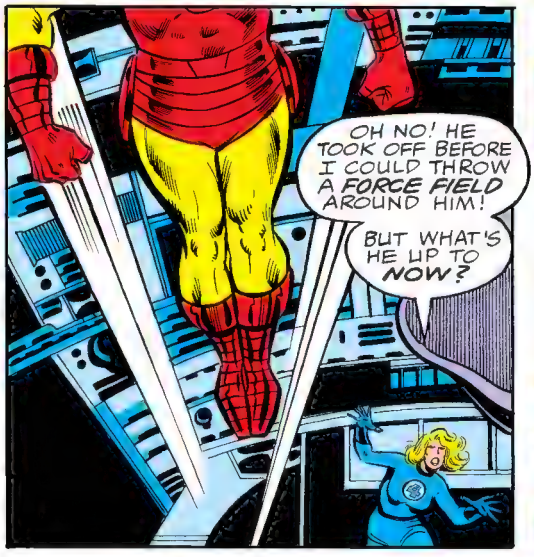

DEFTLY, THE IRON-CLAD INTRUDER DODGES JOHNNY STORM'S FLAME-BOLTS--

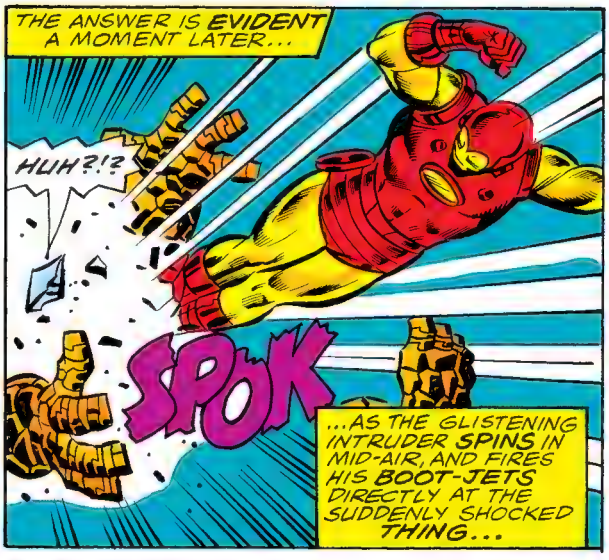

--AND SILENTLY, GRIMLY, ANSWERS WITH AN ENERGY-BLAST OF HIS OWN.
KTOK!
THE REPULSOR RAYS IN HIS GLOVE SEND THE HUMAN TORCH CRASHING HEADLONG INTO REED RICHARDS' INTRICATE COMPUTER NETWORK--

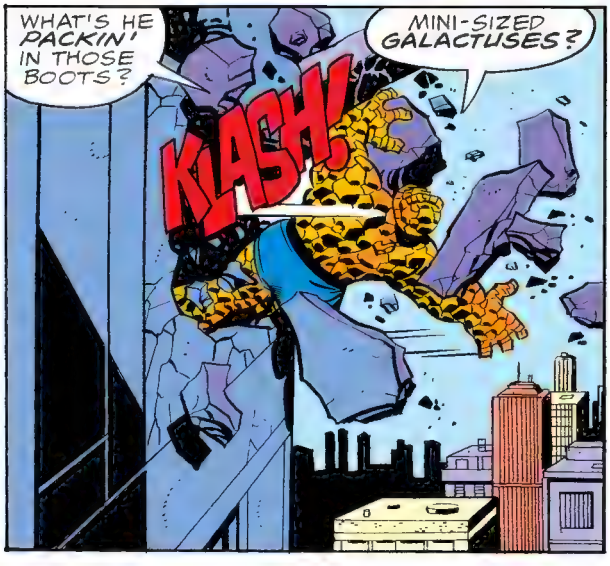

YA TIN-HEADED TWERP! THAT DID IT! I'M THE ONLY JOE WHO C'N LAY INTA THE TORCH LIKE THAT!
SKRUNCH
THE THING'S MASSIVE MUSCLES WRENCH A DAMAGED COMPUTER BANK FROM ITS CASING...

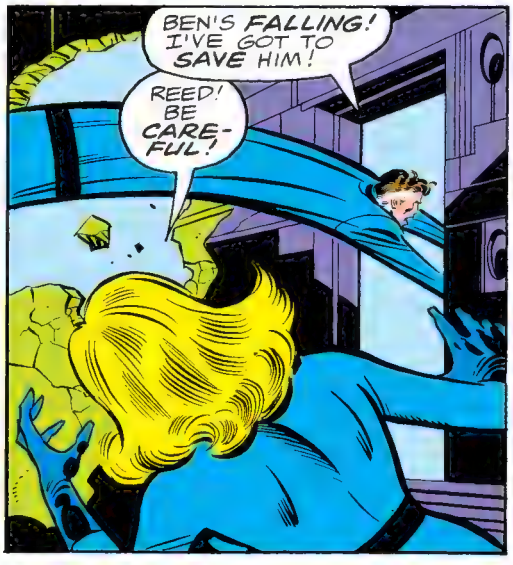
...AND WITH SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE EASE, HE HURLS IT AT THE GOLDEN ATTACKER...
BLAST ONE OF US AN' YA TAKE ON US ALL!
GOT THAT, YA CLANKIN' CLUNK A' RUST? YA UNNERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYIN'?

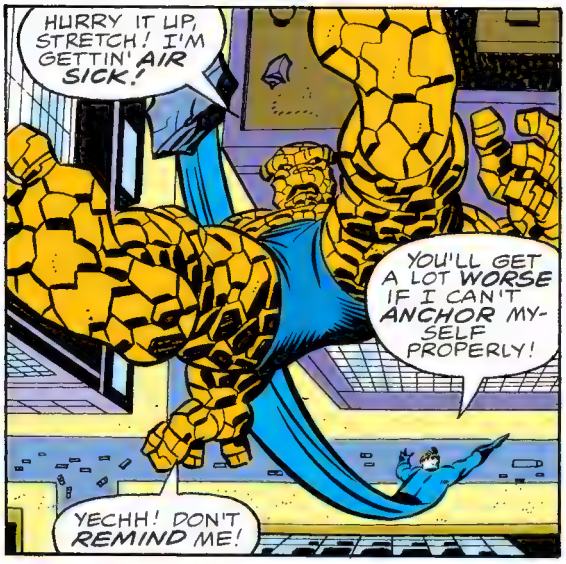

BUT THE ARMORED AVENGER IS SILENT AS HE FIRES HIS REPULSOR RAYS ONCE MORE...
CRIPES! HE MELTED THE WHOLE THING!
FUMP!


OH NO! HE TOOK OFF BEFORE I COULD THROW A FORCE FIELD AROUND HIM!
BUT WHAT'S HE UP TO NOW?

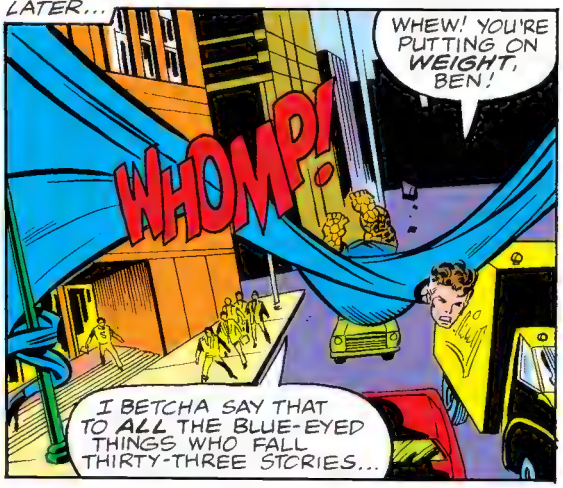

THE ANSWER IS EVIDENT A MOMENT LATER...
HUH?!?
SPOK
...AS THE GLISTENING INTRUDER SPINS IN MID-AIR, AND FIRES HIS BOOT-JETS DIRECTLY AT THE SUDDENLY SHOCKED THING...

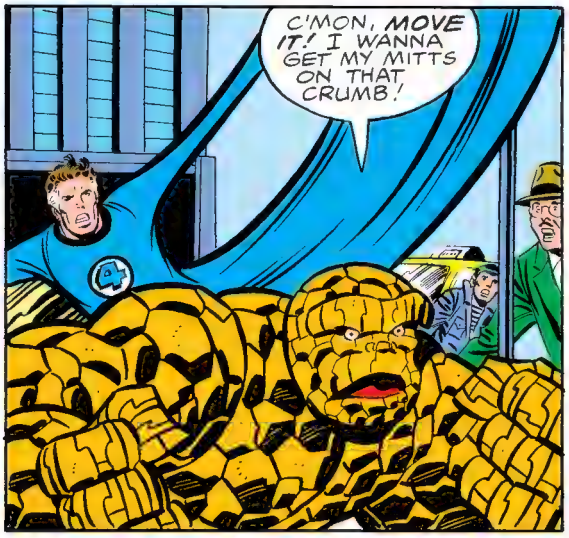

WHAT'S HE PACKIN' IN THOSE BOOTS?
MINI-SIZED GALACTUSES?
KLASH!


BEN'S FALLING! I'VE GOT TO SAVE HIM!
REED! BE CARE-FUL!

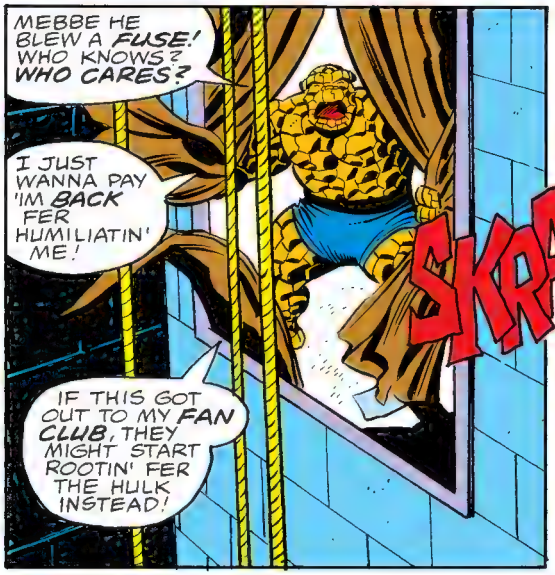


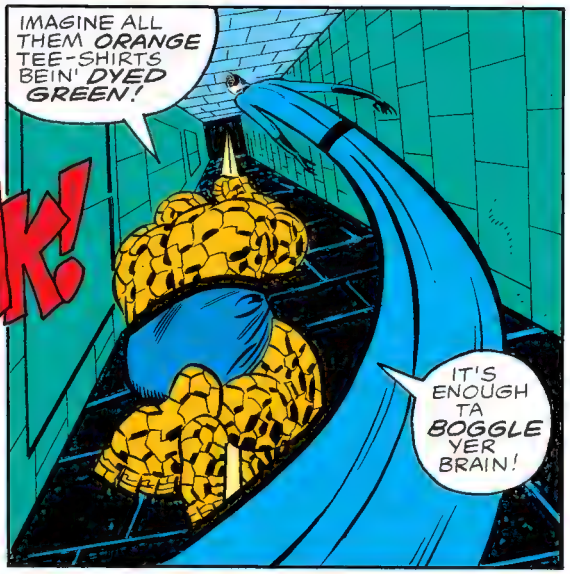
WITH PRACTICED EASE, MR. FANTASTIC STRETCHES BETWEEN FOUR CITY LAMP-POSTS, AND GRIPS THE STEEL SUPPORTS AS TIGHTLY AS HE CAN. THEN, A MOMENT LATER...





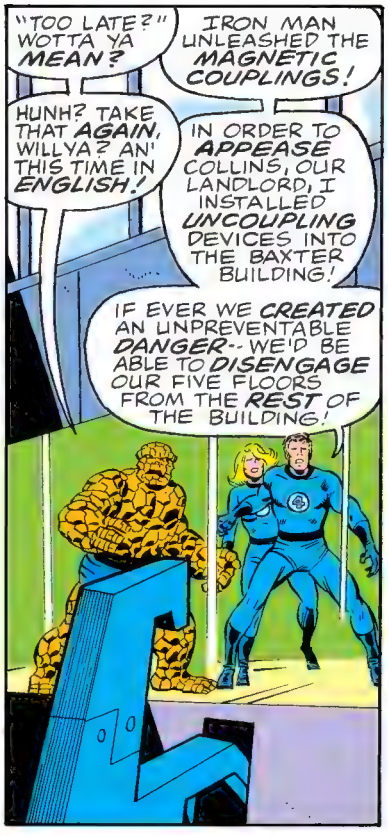
OUR SPECIAL ELEVATOR DON'T WORK.
IRON MAN MUST HAVE SABOTAGED THE COMPUTER CONTROLS! BUT WHY?
THE GOLDEN AVENGER HAS ALWAYS BEEN ON OUR SIDE!

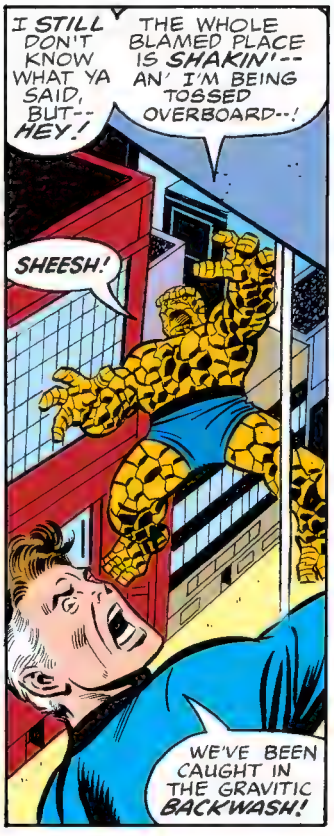

MEBBE HE BLEW A FUSE! WHO KNOWS? WHO CARES?
I JUST WANNA PAY 'IM BACK FER HUMILIATIN' ME!
IF THIS GOT OUT TO MY FAN CLUB, THEY MIGHT START ROOTIN' FER THE HULK INSTEAD!



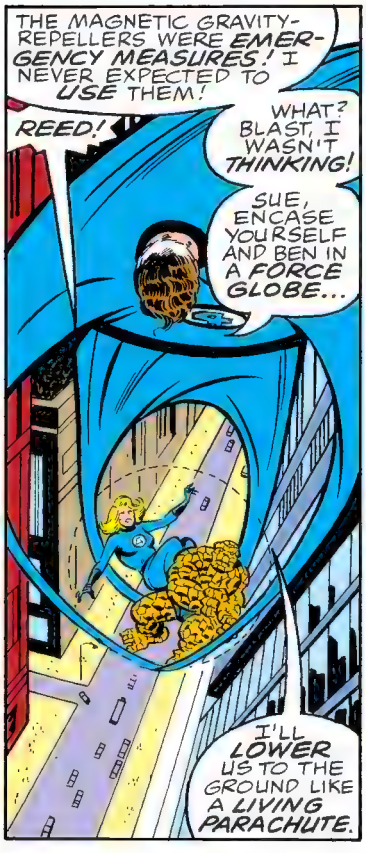
WHILE REED AND BEN HASTILY WEND THEIR WAY UP THE ELEVATOR SHAFT...
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE FIGHTING US, IRON MAN--
--BUT I CAN'T LET YOUR RAMPAGE CONTINUE.
I'M SORRY, BUT YOU'LL STAY PUT IN MY FORCE GLOBE UNTIL REED RETUR-- WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
ONCE MORE, MIGHTY REPULSOR RAYS ARE FIRED--
--SCATTERING THE ATOMS OF SUE'S FORCE SHIELD INTO NOTHINGNESS.
IF HE CAN SHATTER MY FORCE FIELD, I'D BETTER BECOME INVISIBLE--
WHAT? HE CAN SOMEHOW STILL SENSE ME--
KTAM
THE CIRCUITRY IN HIS MASK MUST PICK UP MY FOOTFALLS!
SWOK
I-I'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM HIM... FIND THE OTHERS!
SUE SLAMS THE DOOR BEHIND HER AND RUNS DOWN A LONG CORRIDER...
...BUT HER SILENT PURSUER SIMPLY BOLTS THE DOOR AND TURNS.
AFTER ALL, SHE ISN'T HIS OBJECTIVE...
THAT'S IT, RUST-HEAD! YOUR GAME IS OVER!
NOT EVEN YOUR ARMOR CAN WITH-STAND MY HIGH-INTENSITY HEAT BLAST!
C'MON, IRON MAN-- GIVE! YOU CAN'T LAST MUCH LONGER IN THERE!
FOOSH!
WHAA--?!?
WITHOUT A WORD, THE IRON INVADER LUNGES FORWARD AND GRABS THE SURPRISED JOHNNY STORM...

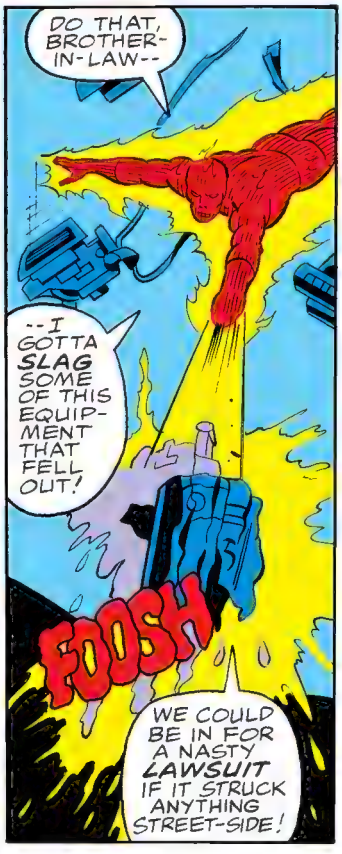
...ONLY TO TOSS HIM CASUALLY ASIDE LIKE A USELESS RAG DOLL...
UNGHHH!
WHAK!
MEANWHILE...
NEVER MIND US. WHERE'S IRON MAN?
REED! BEN! THANK HEAVEN YOU'RE SAFE!
IN THERE-- WITH JOHNNY!
A MOMENT LATER, BEN GRIMM'S STRENGTH PROVIDES AN ENTRANCE...
KRASH!
OH NO! HE'S PULLING THE UNCOUPLING LEVER! STOP HIM!
THERE'S THE BUM!
DANGER
BUT THE ARMORED INTRUDER WHIRLS, HIS POWERFUL LEG SLAMS INTO A HEAVY DESK--
WOK
--HURTLING IT RIGHT INTO A CERTAIN BLUE-EYED BENJAMIN J. GRIMM...
THIS CINCHES IT, STRETCH-- IRON MAN'S GONE WHAKKO!
ANYONE WHO THINKS A BABY DESK'S GONNA STOP THE EVER-LOVIN' THING HAS GOTTA BE OUTTA HIS TREE!
KROK
HOWEVER, THE NEXT MOMENT REVEALS THE TRUTH. THE DESK WAS NOT INTENDED TO STOP THE BRUTISH THING...
...BUT MERELY TO SLOW HIM DOWN WHILE A CERTAIN CRIMSON LEVER IS PULLED...
AUNT PETUNIA'S GIRDLE! WHAT'S HAPPENIN'?
BLAST! WE WERE TOO LATE!
SNAP!
SNAP!
SNAP!
SNAP!


"TOO LATE?" WOTTA YA MEAN?
IRON MAN UNLEASHED THE MAGNETIC COUPLINGS!
HUNH? TAKE THAT AGAIN, WILLYA? AN' THIS TIME IN ENGLISH!
IN ORDER TO APPEASE COLLINS, OUR LANDLORD, I INSTALLED UNCOUPLING DEVICES INTO THE BAXTER BUILDING!
IF EVER WE CREATED AN UNPREVENTABLE DANGER--WE'D BE ABLE TO DISENGAGE OUR FIVE FLOORS FROM THE REST OF THE BUILDING!

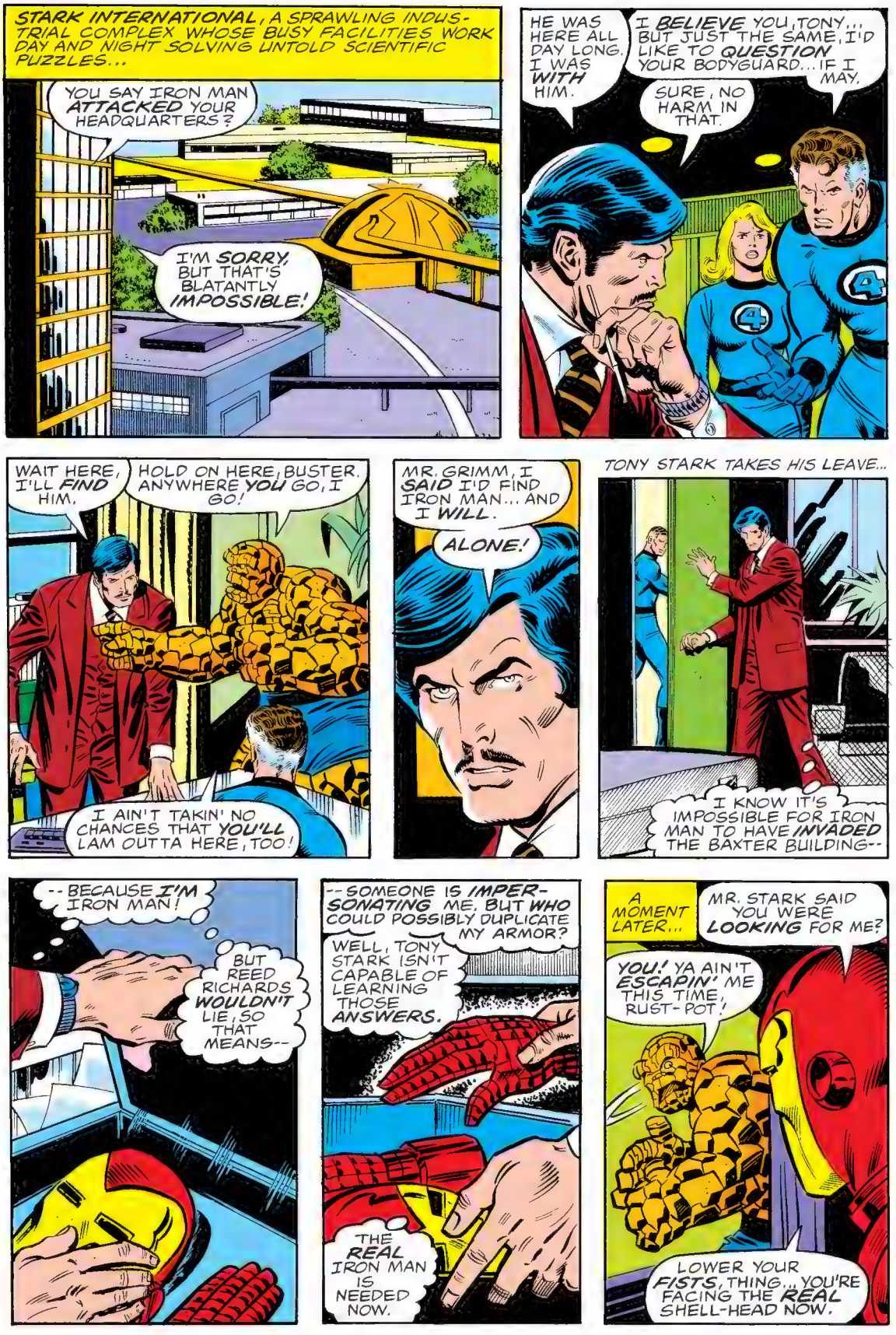

I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT YA SAID, BUT--HEY!
THE WHOLE BLAMED PLACE IS SHAKIN'--AN' I'M BEING TOSSED OVERBOARD--!
SHEESH!
WE'VE BEEN CAUGHT IN THE GRAVITIC BACKWASH!

CRIPES! THE BAXTER BUILDING'S TAKIN' OFF!

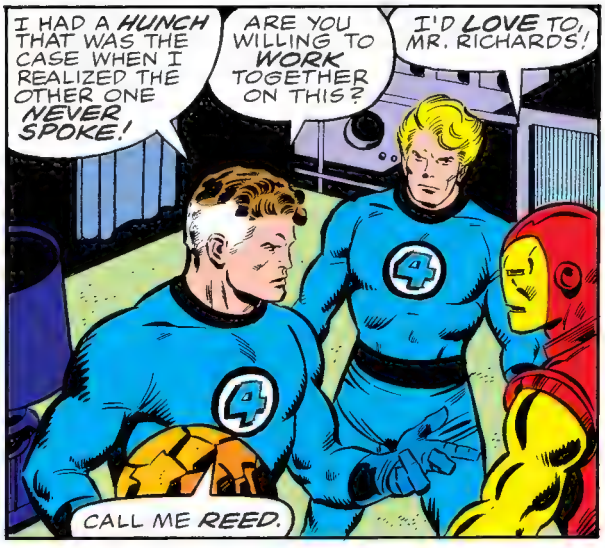

THE MAGNETIC GRAVITY-REPELLERS WERE EMERGENCY MEASURES! I NEVER EXPECTED TO USE THEM!
REED!
WHAT? BLAST, I WASN'T THINKING!
SUE, ENCASE YOURSELF AND BEN IN A FORCE GLOBE...
I'LL LOWER US TO THE GROUND LIKE A LIVING PARACHUTE.


DO THAT, BROTHER-IN-LAW--
--I GOTTA SLAG SOME OF THIS EQUIPMENT THAT FELL OUT!
FOOSH
WE COULD BE IN FOR A NASTY LAWSUIT IF IT STRUCK ANYTHING STREET-SIDE!

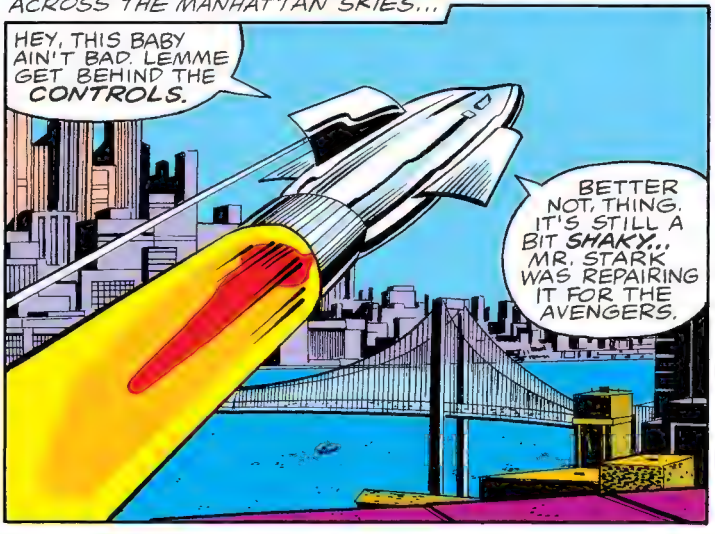
A FEW MOMENTS LATER, THE F.F. SAFELY LAND ON THE BUSY SIDE STREET BELOW...
WHAT IN THE NAME A' YANCY STREETS GOIN' ON HERE? THE ONE THING I KNOW FER SURE IS OUR BUILDIN' JUST TOOK OFF LIKE A BLAMED BIRD!
I DON'T KNOW, BEN... BUT I INTEND TO FIND OUT--
--BY VISITING TONY STARK --IRON MAN'S EMPLOYER!
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER--WE'LL GET OUR ANSWERS FROM HIM!

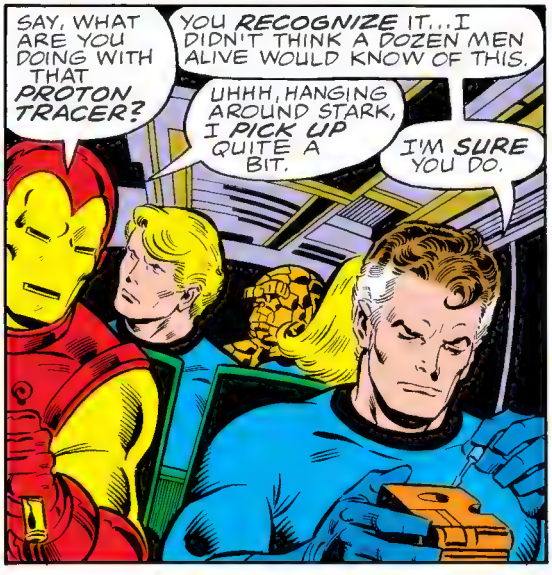

STARK INTERNATIONAL, A SPRAWLING INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX WHOSE BUSY FACILITIES WORK DAY AND NIGHT SOLVING UNTOLD SCIENTIFIC PUZZLES...
YOU SAY IRON MAN ATTACKED YOUR HEADQUARTERS?
I'M SORRY, BUT THAT'S BLATANTLY IMPOSSIBLE!
HE WAS HERE ALL DAY LONG. I WAS WITH HIM.
I BELIEVE YOU, TONY... BUT JUST THE SAME, I'D LIKE TO QUESTION YOUR BODYGUARD... IF I MAY.
SURE, NO HARM IN THAT.
WAIT HERE, I'LL FIND HIM.
HOLD ON HERE, BUSTER. ANYWHERE YOU GO, I GO!
I AIN'T TAKIN' NO CHANCES THAT YOU'LL LAM OUTTA HERE, TOO!
MR. GRIMM, I SAID I'D FIND IRON MAN... AND I WILL.
ALONE!
TONY STARK TAKES HIS LEAVE...
I KNOW IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR IRON MAN TO HAVE INVADED THE BAXTER BUILDING--
-- BECAUSE I'M IRON MAN!
BUT REED RICHARDS WOULDN'T LIE, SO THAT MEANS--
-- SOMEONE IS IMPERSONATING ME. BUT WHO COULD POSSIBLY DUPLICATE MY ARMOR?
WELL, TONY STARK ISN'T CAPABLE OF LEARNING THOSE ANSWERS.
THE REAL IRON MAN IS NEEDED NOW.
A MOMENT LATER...
MR. STARK SAID YOU WERE LOOKING FOR ME?
YOU! YA AIN'T ESCAPIN' ME THIS TIME, RUST-POT!
LOWER YOUR FISTS, THING... YOU'RE FACING THE REAL SHELL-HEAD NOW.

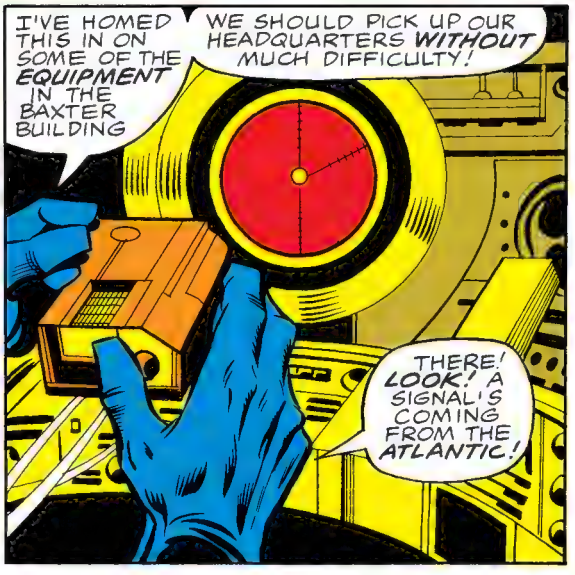
HUNH? YOU'RE SAYING THE OTHER ONE WAS AN IMPOSTER?
SURE! I KNEW IT ALL THE TIME!
LIKE BLAZES YOU DID.
WANNA MAKE SOMETHIN' OF IT, JUNIOR?

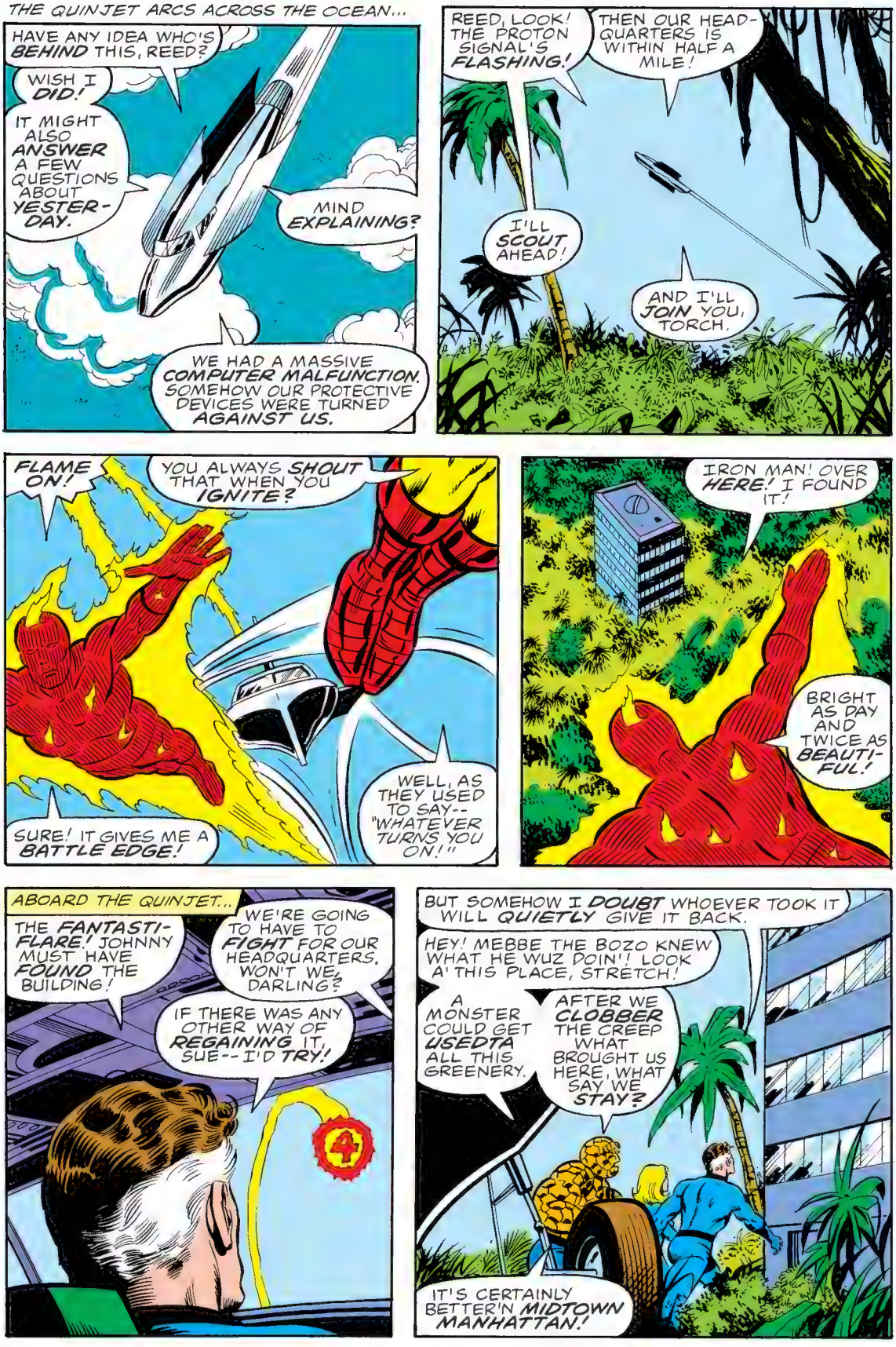

I HAD A HUNCH THAT WAS THE CASE WHEN I REALIZED THE OTHER ONE NEVER SPOKE!
ARE YOU WILLING TO WORK TOGETHER ON THIS?
I'D LOVE TO, MR. RICHARDS!
CALL ME REED.

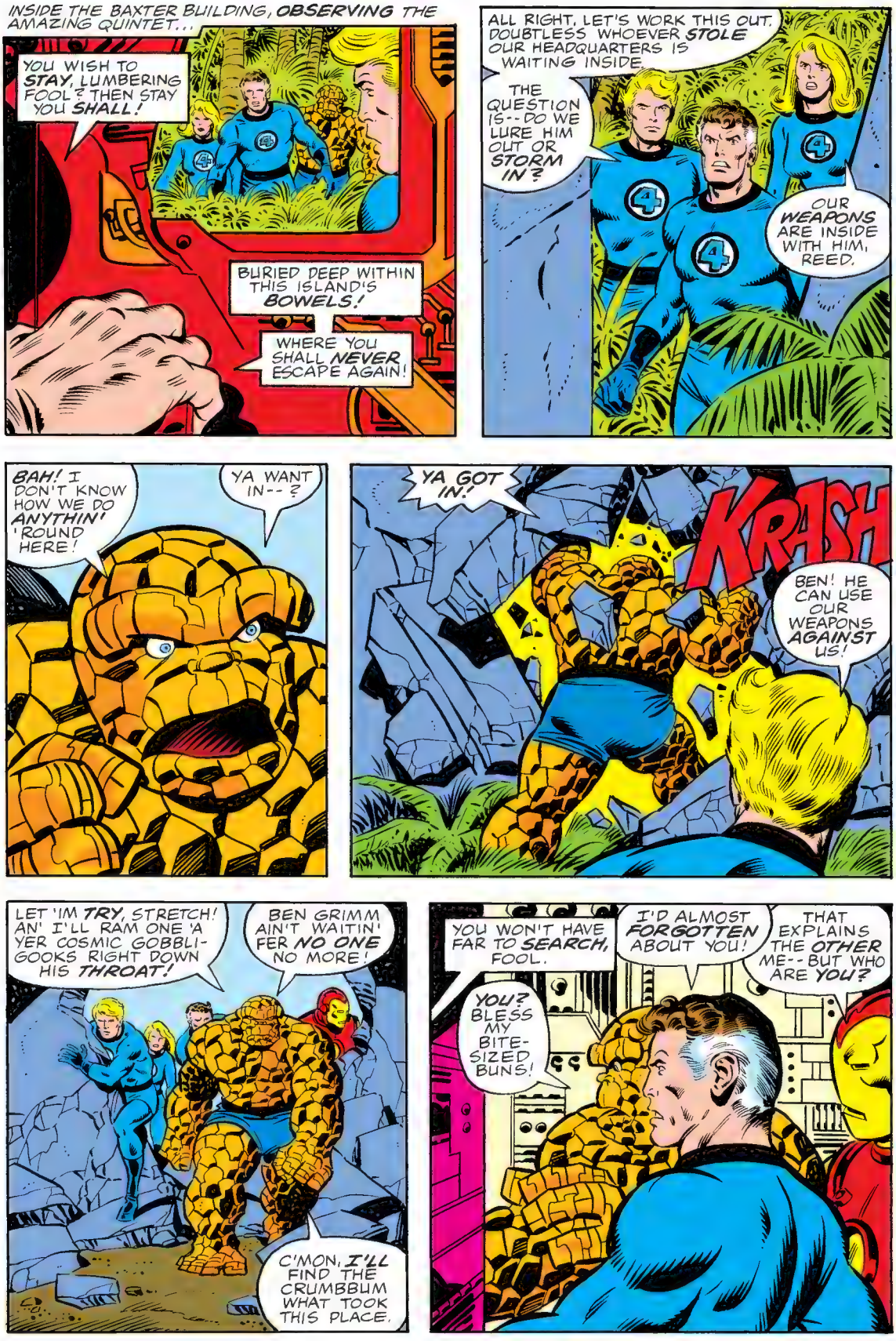
WITHIN MOMENTS, AN AVENGERS QUINJET STREAKS ACROSS THE MANHATTAN SKIES...

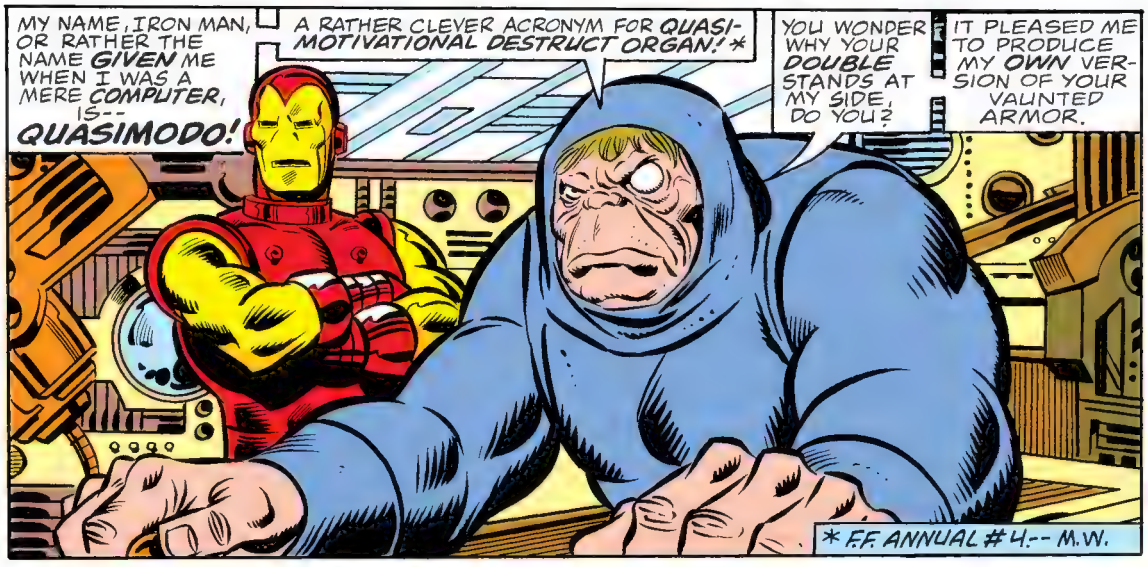

HEY, THIS BABY AIN'T BAD. LEMME GET BEHIND THE CONTROLS.
BETTER NOT, THING. IT'S STILL A BIT SHAKY... MR. STARK WAS REPAIRING IT FOR THE AVENGERS.

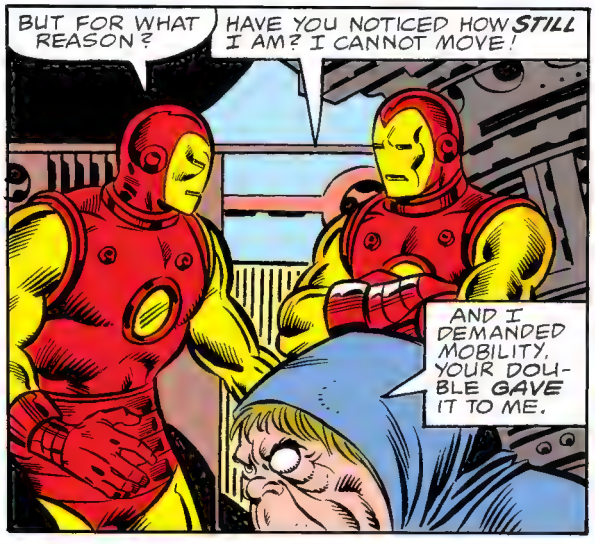

SAY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT PROTON TRACER?
YOU RECOGNIZE IT... I DIDN'T THINK A DOZEN MEN ALIVE WOULD KNOW OF THIS.
UHHH, HANGING AROUND STARK, I PICK UP QUITE A BIT.
I'M SURE YOU DO.

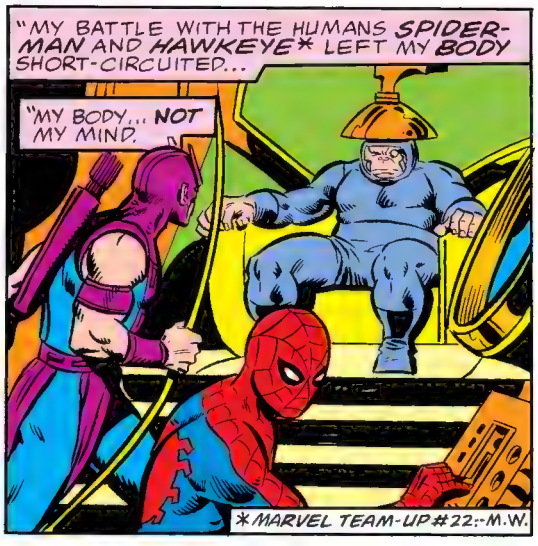

I'VE HOMED THIS IN ON SOME OF THE EQUIPMENT IN THE BAXTER BUILDING
WE SHOULD PICK UP OUR HEADQUARTERS WITHOUT MUCH DIFFICULTY!
THERE! LOOK! A SIGNAL'S COMING FROM THE ATLANTIC!

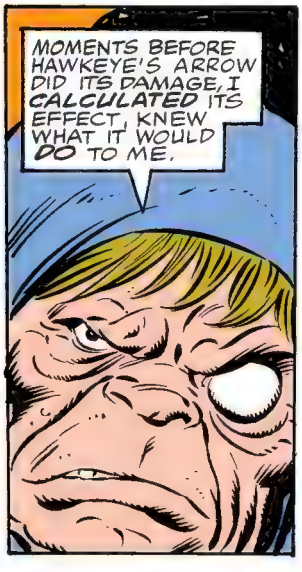

THE QUINJET ARCS ACROSS THE OCEAN...
HAVE ANY IDEA WHO'S BEHIND THIS, REED?
WISH I DID!
IT MIGHT ALSO ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YESTER-DAY.
MIND EXPLAINING?
WE HAD A MASSIVE COMPUTER MALFUNCTION. SOMEHOW OUR PROTECTIVE DEVICES WERE TURNED AGAINST US.
REED, LOOK! THE PROTON SIGNAL'S FLASHING!
THEN OUR HEAD-QUARTERS IS WITHIN HALF A MILE!
I'LL SCOUT AHEAD!
AND I'LL JOIN YOU, TORCH.
FLAME ON!
YOU ALWAYS SHOUT THAT WHEN YOU IGNITE?
WELL, AS THEY USED TO SAY-- "WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON!"
SURE! IT GIVES ME A BATTLE EDGE!
IRON MAN! OVER HERE! I FOUND IT!
BRIGHT AS DAY AND TWICE AS BEAUTI-FUL!
ABOARD THE QUINJET...
THE FANTASTI-FLARE! JOHNNY MUST HAVE FOUND THE BUILDING!
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO FIGHT FOR OUR HEADQUARTERS, WON'T WE, DARLING?
IF THERE WAS ANY OTHER WAY OF REGAINING IT, SUE-- I'D TRY!
BUT SOMEHOW I DOUBT WHOEVER TOOK IT WILL QUIETLY GIVE IT BACK.
HEY! MEBBE THE BOZO KNEW WHAT HE WUZ DOIN'! LOOK A' THIS PLACE, STRETCH!
A MONSTER COULD GET USEDTA ALL THIS GREENERY.
AFTER WE CLOBBER THE CREEP WHAT BROUGHT US HERE, WHAT SAY WE STAY?
IT'S CERTAINLY BETTER'N MIDTOWN MANHATTAN!

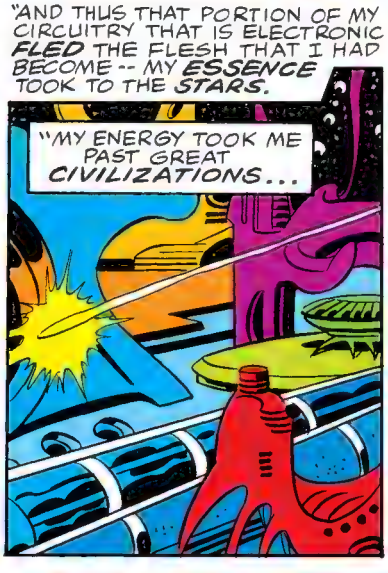

INSIDE THE BAXTER BUILDING, OBSERVING THE AMAZING QUINTET...
YOU WISH TO STAY, LUMBERING FOOL? THEN STAY YOU SHALL!
BURIED DEEP WITHIN THIS ISLAND'S BOWELS!
WHERE YOU SHALL NEVER ESCAPE AGAIN!
ALL RIGHT, LET'S WORK THIS OUT. DOUBTLESS WHOEVER STOLE OUR HEADQUARTERS IS WAITING INSIDE.
THE QUESTION IS--DO WE LURE HIM OUT OR STORM IN?
OUR WEAPONS ARE INSIDE WITH HIM, REED.
BAH! I DON'T KNOW HOW WE DO ANYTHIN' 'ROUND HERE!
YA WANT IN--?
YA GOT IN!
KRASH
BEN! HE CAN USE OUR WEAPONS AGAINST US!
LET 'IM TRY, STRETCH! AN' I'LL RAM ONE 'A YER COSMIC GOBBLI-GOOKS RIGHT DOWN HIS THROAT!
BEN GRIMM AIN'T WAITIN' FER NO ONE NO MORE!
C'MON, I'LL FIND THE CRUMBBUM WHAT TOOK THIS PLACE.
YOU WON'T HAVE FAR TO SEARCH, FOOL.
I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN ABOUT YOU!
THAT EXPLAINS THE OTHER ME--BUT WHO ARE YOU?
YOU? BLESS MY BITE-SIZED BUNS!


MY NAME, IRON MAN, OR RATHER THE NAME GIVEN ME WHEN I WAS A MERE COMPUTER, IS-- QUASIMODO!
A RATHER CLEVER ACRONYM FOR QUASI-MOTIVATIONAL DESTRUCT ORGAN! *
YOU WONDER WHY YOUR DOUBLE STANDS AT MY SIDE, DO YOU?
IT PLEASED ME TO PRODUCE MY OWN VERSION OF YOUR VAUNTED ARMOR.
* F.F. ANNUAL #4.-- M.W.


BUT FOR WHAT REASON?
HAVE YOU NOTICED HOW STILL I AM? I CANNOT MOVE!
AND I DEMANDED MOBILITY, YOUR DOUBLE GAVE IT TO ME.

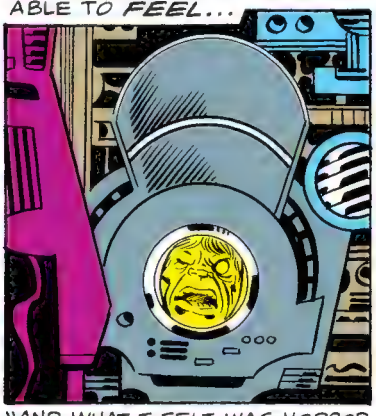

"MY BATTLE WITH THE HUMANS SPIDER-MAN AND HAWKEYE * LEFT MY BODY SHORT-CIRCUITED...
"MY BODY... NOT MY MIND.
* MARVEL TEAM-UP #22:- M.W.


MOMENTS BEFORE HAWKEYE'S ARROW DID ITS DAMAGE, I CALCULATED ITS EFFECT, KNEW WHAT IT WOULD DO TO ME.


"AND THUS THAT PORTION OF MY CIRCUITRY THAT IS ELECTRONIC FLED THE FLESH THAT I HAD BECOME -- MY ESSENCE TOOK TO THE STARS.
"MY ENERGY TOOK ME PAST GREAT CIVILIZATIONS...

"...AND WORLDS THAT LAY DESOLATE AND DYING.
"I SAW SALVATION! I KNEW IT WAS FOR ME! IT WAS WHAT I WAS CREATED FOR.

"YOU MUST *UNDERSTAND*, I WAS ALWAYS *MORE* THAN A *COMPUTER*. I COULD REASON, COMPUTE... I WAS ABLE TO *FEEL*...

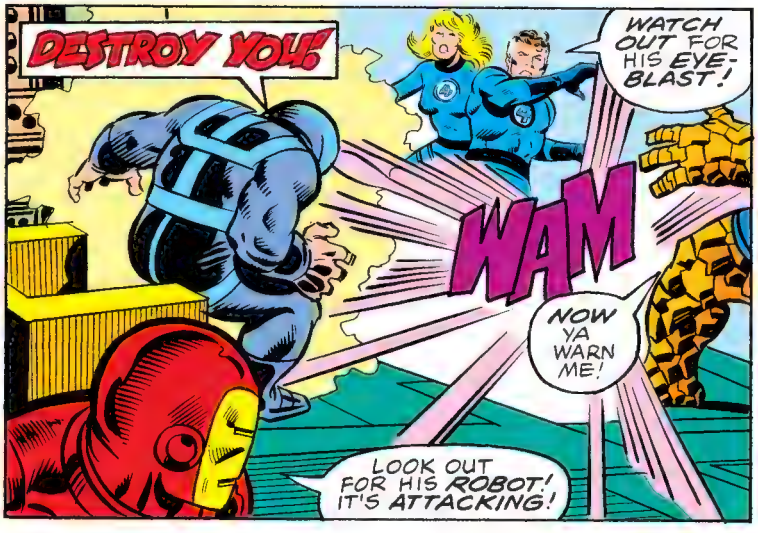


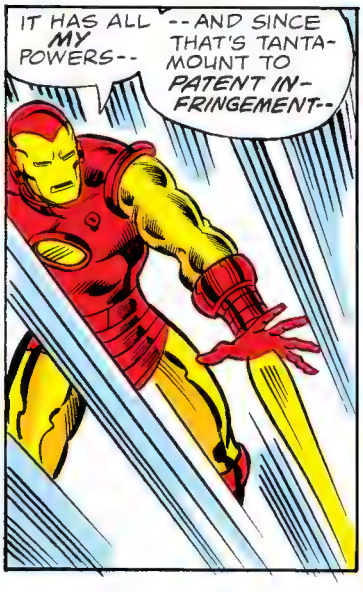
"AND WHAT I FELT WAS HORROR AND *INDIGNATION* AT MY IMPRISONMENT IN A GROTESQUE METAL *SHELL*!

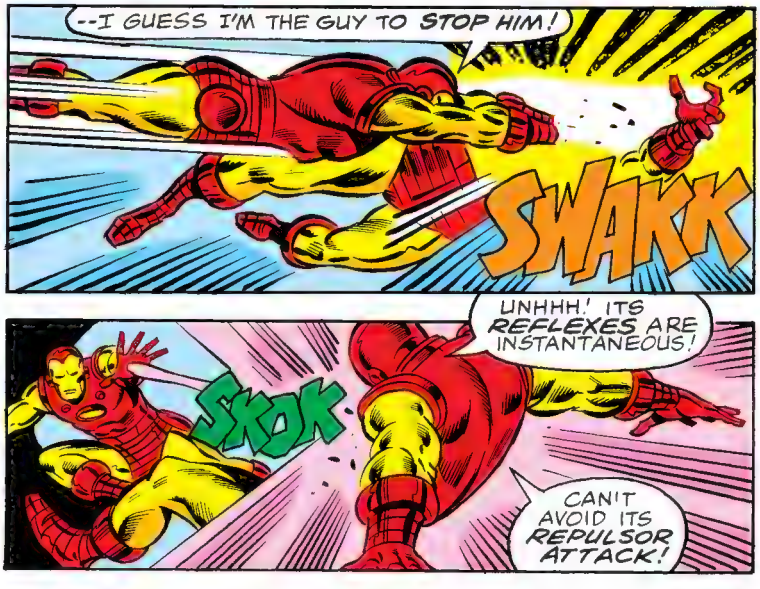
"BUT THEN CAME MY *FIRST* REBIRTH... IN THE GUISE OF A STAR-SPANNING ALIEN KNOWN AS THE *SILVER SURFER*!*

"WITH BUT A *WAVE* OF HIS COSMIC-POWERED HAND, I HAD BECOME A *LIVING BEING*!

*FF ANNUAL #5.







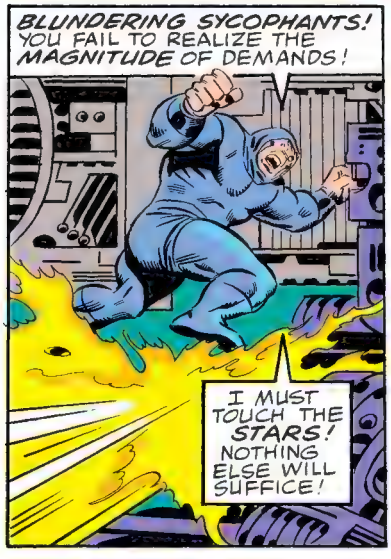
WELL, A POWER BLAST NOW AND THEN ISN'T GOING TO CRIPPLE ME.
NOT WHEN I'M GOING AGAINST LITTLE MORE THAN AN EMPTY SUIT!
BTOK
ALL RIGHT, GUY, LET'S SEE WHAT IRON MAN IS REALLY MADE OF--!
SKRASH
AN IMPERFECT HEART... OR A SOUL OF WIRES AND CIRCUITS!
NOTHING SHALL STAY ME FROM REACHING MY DESTINY!
MY HOME IS IN THE STARS!
THAT'S WHERE I'M GONNA SEND YA, GRUESOME!
THING STYLE!
CRETINOUS DOLT! YOU ATTACK ME AS IF I AM ANOTHER OF YOUR HUMAN FOES!
WOK
I AM MORE THAN THAT, FOOL! FAR MORE!
HOW MORTIFYIN'! BEIN' SMASHED TWICE IN ONE DAY!
FIRST BY AN R2D2 REJECT, AN' NOW BY A GARGOYLE WHAT MAKES ME LOOK GOOD!
KRASH
HOW'M I EVER GONNA LIVE THIS DOWN?
STILL YOU PRESS YOUR ATTACK... AND NEVER DO YOU QUESTION HOW I REGAINED MY MOBILITY!
I HAVE BEEN TAPPING THE POWER WITHIN YOUR HEAD-QUARTERS!
AND THAT IS POWER ENOUGH TO MAKE ME INVINCIBLE!

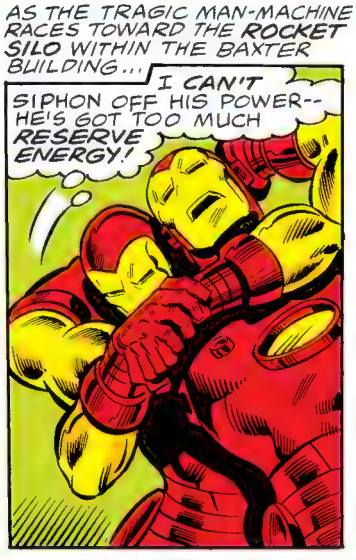
POWER ENOUGH TO DESTROY ANY WHO-- WHAT?!?
HURRY, REED! MOVE! I CAN'T KEEP UP MY SHIELD FOR LONG!
THE POWER HE'S USING AGAINST IT IS INCREDIBLE!
DON'T YOU WORRY, SIS! I'LL GIVE 'IM A TASTE OF MY WHITE HOT FLAME!
HUMAN NONENTITY! THIS BODY WAS CONCEIVED BY A BLENDING OF COSMIC ENERGIES!
I CAN WITHSTAND THE HEAT OF A SUN GONE NOVA! YOUR PALTRY POWERS ARE MEANINGLESS TO ME! MEANINGLESS!!
MELTED THE MACHINERY HE THREW AT ME-- BUT I CAN'T STOP HIM!
DON'T FRET, JOHNNY-- INDIVIDUALLY, HE MAY STALL US--
-- BUT COLLECTIVELY-- HE'S HELPLESS!
REED! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO CHECK ON A THEORY, SUE!
HOPEFULLY, HE SUPPLIED US THE ANSWER TO HIS DESTRUCTION!
THERE!
WHAT?!! NO LONGER DOES THE POWER FLOW THROUGH ME!
IT MUST BE RICHARDS! HE HAS STOPPED THE ENERGY DRAIN!
MEANWHILE, A BATTLE RAGES ON ANOTHER FRONT...
HE'S NEARLY AS STRONG AS I AM... BUT HE DOESN'T TIRE!
MY ONLY HOPE IS TO MAKE HIM EXPEND HIS ENERGY--
--IF THAT'S EVEN POSSIBLE! I HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH POWER QUASIMODO SUPPLIED HIM WITH!
WITH THE SPEED OF A FLASHING MISSILE, THE MASSIVE TREE IS THROWN AT THE IRON MAN ROBOT...

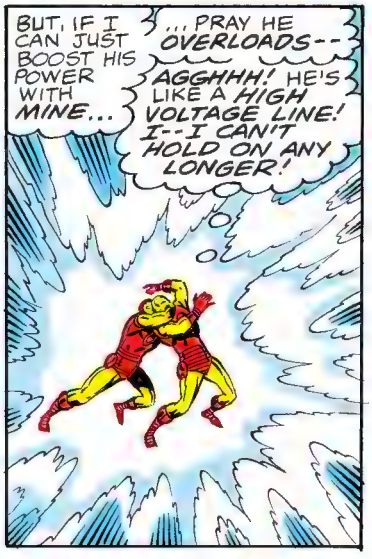
...WHO RESPONDS SWIFTLY, SILENTLY, WITH ITS OWN FANTASTIC POWER.
KAK
AND IRON MAN CANNOT HELP BUT RESPECT THE POWER WHICH QUASIMODO HAD BUILT INTO HIS SUIT...

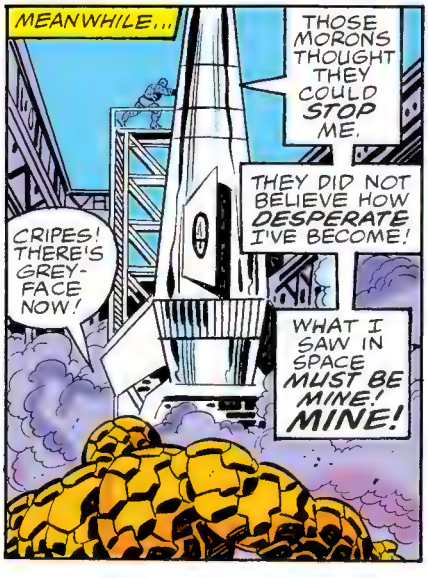
MEAN-WHILE...
YER RIGHT, STRETCH! GRUESOME'S NO LONGER AS STRONG AS HE IS UGLY!
IT WON'T TAKE LONG TO PUT THE KIBBOSH ON HIM.
WOK

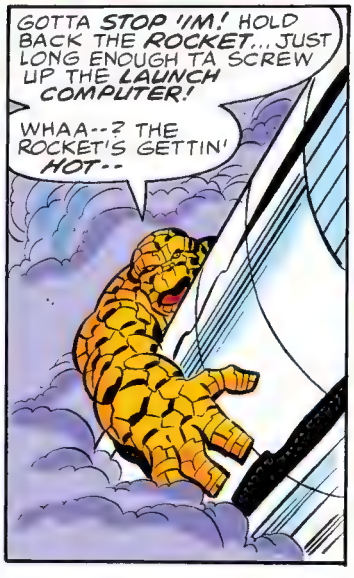
LET ME GET A TURN, BENJY. HE TICKED ME OFF, TOO.
AW, YA JUST WANNA HOG ALL THE GLORY, RIGHT, MATCHSTICK?

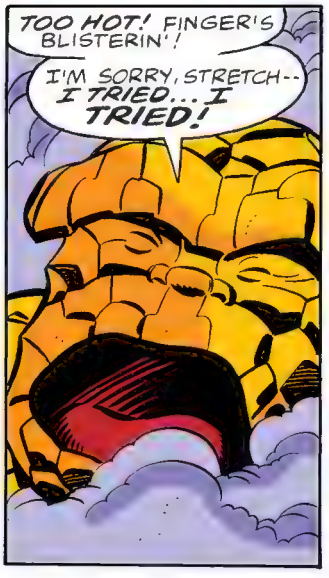

BLUNDERING SYCOPHANTS! YOU FAIL TO REALIZE THE MAGNITUDE OF DEMANDS!
I MUST TOUCH THE STARS! NOTHING ELSE WILL SUFFICE!


AS THE TRAGIC MAN-MACHINE RACES TOWARD THE ROCKET SILO WITHIN THE BAXTER BUILDING...
I CAN'T SIPHON OFF HIS POWER-- HE'S GOT TOO MUCH RESERVE ENERGY!


BUT, IF I CAN JUST BOOST HIS POWER WITH MINE...
...PRAY HE OVERLOADS--
AGGHHH! HE'S LIKE A HIGH VOLTAGE LINE! I--I CAN'T HOLD ON ANY LONGER!


MEANWHILE...
THOSE MORONS THOUGHT THEY COULD STOP ME.
THEY DID NOT BELIEVE HOW DESPERATE I'VE BECOME!
CRIPES! THERE'S GREY-FACE NOW!
WHAT I SAW IN SPACE MUST BE MINE! MINE!


GOTTA STOP 'IM! HOLD BACK THE ROCKET... JUST LONG ENOUGH TA SCREW UP THE LAUNCH COMPUTER!
WHAA--? THE ROCKET'S GETTIN' HOT--


TOO HOT! FINGER'S BLISTERIN'!
I'M SORRY, STRETCH-- I TRIED... I TRIED!

AS THE PAIN-STRICKEN BEN GRIMM FALLS BACK TO NURSE HIS WOUNDS...
I DID IT! TAPPING INTO STARK'S COMPUTERS TOLD ME HOW TO CONTROL THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S COMPUTRONIC ROOM!
MY PLAN TO SLAY THEM WITH THEIR OWN WEAPONRY FAILED--
BUT I'VE GAINED ACCESS TO WHAT I NEEDED ALL ALONG! THIS ROCKET IS MINE! MINE!
HE'S GONE!
WHAT DID HE FIND IN SPACE THAT HE COULD WANT SO?
REED! YOU THINK HE WAS BEHIND OUR COMPUTER FOUL-UP YESTERDAY?
WHO CARES? JUST GET ME SOME BLISTER CREAM-- FAST!
MY TEN LITTLE PIGGIES FEEL LIKE A VOLCANO ATE 'EM!
I MANAGED TO OVERLOAD MY ROBOT DOUBLE ...AND JUST IN TIME!
HEY, WHERE'S UGLY?
HE GOT TO OUR ROCKET-- TOOK OFF TO WHATEVER'S UP THERE!
I-- I WONDER IF WE'LL EVER SEE HIM AGAIN...
4
IN SPACE, JUST BEYOND THE RIM OF OUR PLANET...
MY DESTINY BEGAN AS A COMPUTER WITH CIRCUITS-- BUT IT SHALL END WHEN I REACH MY FINAL DESTINATION-- WHEN I RETURN TO THAT WORLD I--
W-WAIT... HOLD! I FEEL COMPUTER ENERGY FLOWING INTO ME-- THERE IS A MASSIVE COMPUTER SYSTEM CLOSE TO ME ...VERY CLOSE!
BUT I AM TOO FAR FROM ANY PLANET. IT MUST BE A SPACE SHIP!
IT IS IMPOSSIBLE! I AM RECEIVING THE SAME SIGNALS AS FROM THAT WORLD...
WHERE IS THE VESSEL? WHERE IS THE COMPUTER THAT WILL GIVE TO ME THE ULTIMATE POWER OVER EVERY LIVING BEING THAT BREATHES?
WHERE? WHERE? WHERE?
NEXT ISSUE:
...AND A CHILD SHALL SLAY THEM!

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FANTASTIC FOUR
IF THE F.F. HAVE BECOME MONSTERS-
-THEN WHO IS RUSHING TO SAVE THE EARTH?
LEIALOHA

A brilliant scientist— his best friend— the woman he loves— and her fiery-tempered kid brother! Together, they braved the unknown terrors of outer space, and were changed by cosmic rays into something more than merely human!

MR. FANTASTIC! THE THING! THE INVISIBLE GIRL! THE HUMAN TORCH! Now they are the FANTASTIC FOUR— and the world will never be the same again!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE FANTASTIC FOUR!™

MARV WOLFMAN / WRITER/EDITOR | KEITH POLLARD & JOE SINNOTT / ILLUSTRATORS | COSTANZA / letters | G.WEIN / colors | JIM SHOOTER / ED.-IN-CHIEF

THE FABULOUS FOURSOME AGAINST A MENACE THEY CANNOT FIGHT!

...AND A CHILD SHALL SLAY THEM!

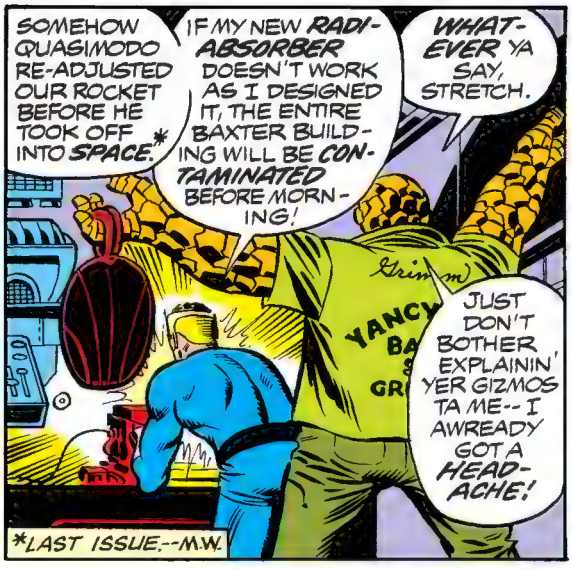
OFTTIMES THE MOST TUMULTUOUS EVENTS BEGIN NOT WITH THE BLASTING OF CANNONS, BUT WITH THE QUIET LONGING FOR LEISURE...

C'MON, STRETCH, I GOT US A BOWLIN' ALLEY RESERVED FER SEVEN.

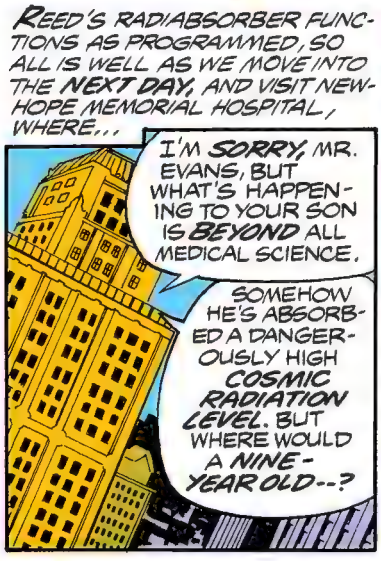
SLIP ON YER RUBBER SHOESIES AN' LET'S SPLIT!

I WISH I COULD, BEN-- BUT I HAVEN'T THE TIME!

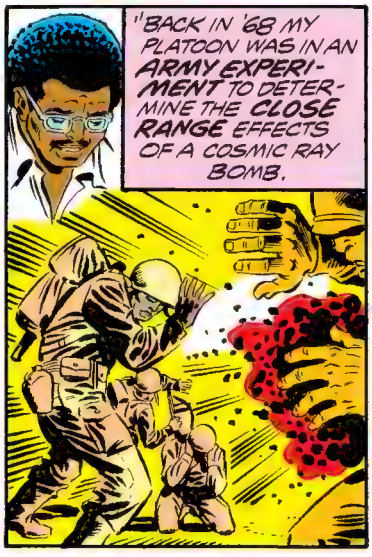
I'VE DISCOVERED A HIGHLY-CONCENTRATED RADIATION POCKET IN OUR VENTILATOR SHAFT THAT HAS GOT TO BE DISSIPATED IMMEDIATELY!


SOMEHOW QUASIMODO RE-ADJUSTED OUR ROCKET BEFORE HE TOOK OFF INTO SPACE.*
IF MY NEW RADI-ABSORBER DOESN'T WORK AS I DESIGNED IT, THE ENTIRE BAXTER BUILDING WILL BE CONTAMINATED BEFORE MORNING!
WHATEVER YA SAY, STRETCH.
JUST DON'T BOTHER EXPLAININ' YER GIZMOS TA ME-- I AWREADY GOT A HEADACHE!
*LAST ISSUE.--M.W.

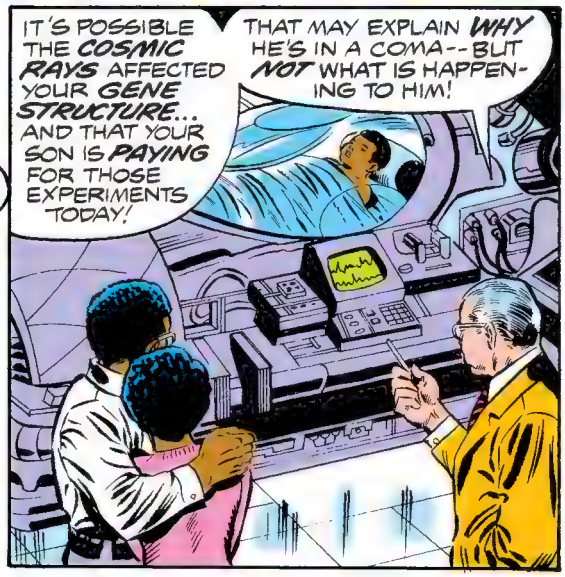
SEEYA IN A BLACK HOLE, HIGH-POCKETS!
IMPOSSIBLE, BEN-- BLACK HOLES ARE COLLAPSED STARS THAT--
I HADDA OPEN MY BIG MOUTH!


REED'S RADIABSORBER FUNCTIONS AS PROGRAMMED, SO ALL IS WELL AS WE MOVE INTO THE NEXT DAY, AND VISIT NEW-HOPE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, WHERE...
I'M SORRY, MR. EVANS, BUT WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOUR SON IS BEYOND ALL MEDICAL SCIENCE.
SOMEHOW HE'S ABSORBED A DANGEROUSLY HIGH COSMIC RADIATION LEVEL. BUT WHERE WOULD A NINE-YEAR OLD--?

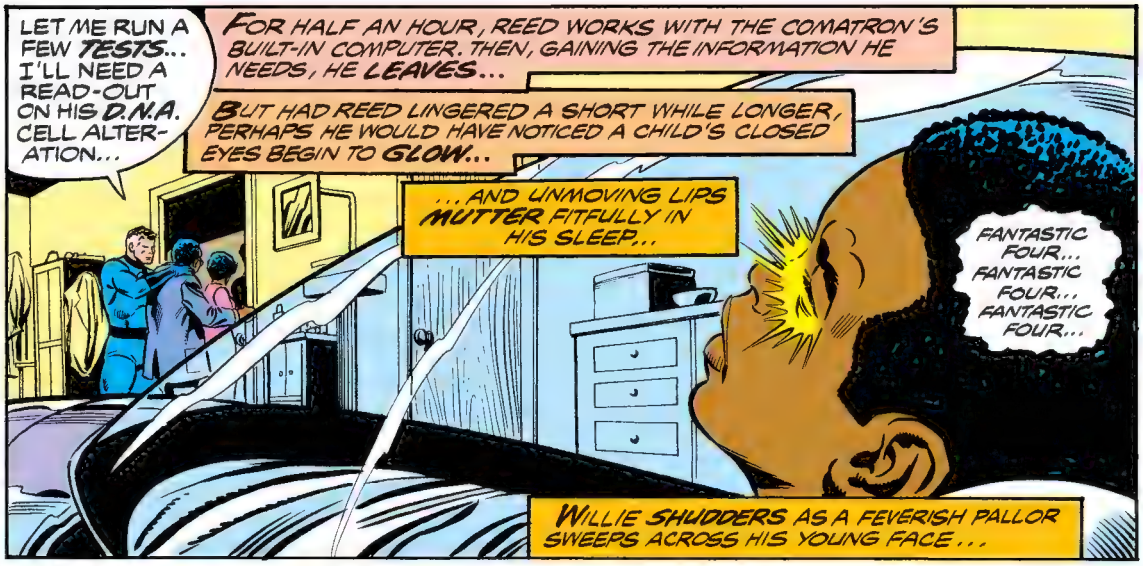
COSMIC RAYS--? THEN IT'S MY FAULT!
WHAT?

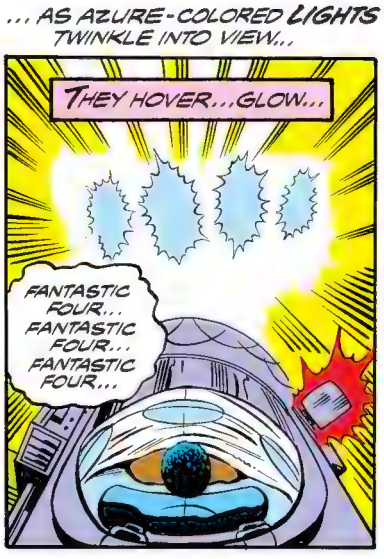

"BACK IN '68 MY PLATOON WAS IN AN ARMY EXPERIMENT TO DETERMINE THE CLOSE RANGE EFFECTS OF A COSMIC RAY BOMB.

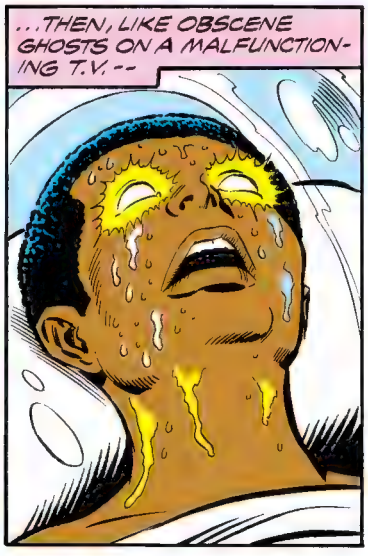
NO ONE SUFFERED ANY, BUT THEY HALTED FURTHER EXPERIMENTS ANYHOW.
YOU DIDN'T SUFFER ANY OUTWARD EFFECTS, MR. EVANS.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, DOCTOR? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
DEEDEE, PLEASE...?
NO, WILLIE, I'M YOUR WIFE... I MUST KNOW WHAT HAPPENED!


IT'S POSSIBLE THE COSMIC RAYS AFFECTED YOUR GENE STRUCTURE... AND THAT YOUR SON IS PAYING FOR THOSE EXPERIMENTS TODAY!
THAT MAY EXPLAIN WHY HE'S IN A COMA-- BUT NOT WHAT IS HAPPENING TO HIM!

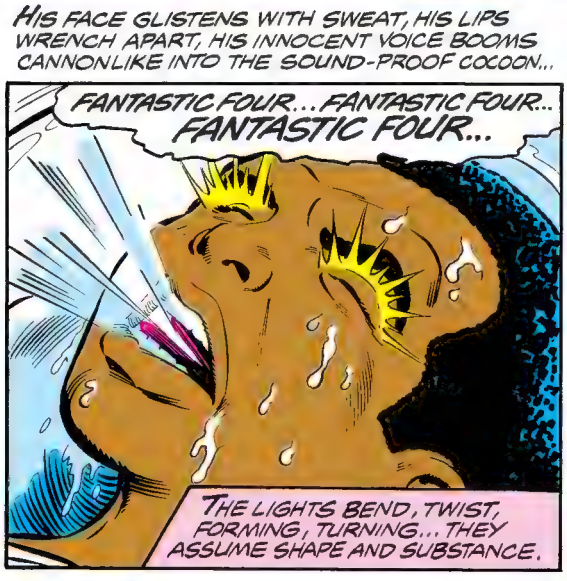
THAT'S WHY I CALLED IN AN OLD STUDENT OF MINE--THE WORLD'S FOREMOST AUTHORITY ON COSMIC RAYS--REED RICHARDS!
THE LEADER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR? THAT SUPER-HERO GROUP?
WILLIE JR. WASTES ALL HIS MONEY BUYING THEIR COMIC BOOKS,.. AND I'VE READ THEY'RE ALWAYS BATTLING SUPER-VILLAINS AND THE LIKE.
THOSE KIND OF PEOPLE DON'T WASTE THEIR TIME ON NORMAL FOLKS.
THAT'S NOT QUITE TRUE, MR. EVANS!
WHA--?
MUCH OF MY TIME IS SPENT WITH MEN LIKE DR. WALLACE IN PERFECTING EQUIPMENT THEY DESPERATELY NEED FOR THEIR WORK.
REED AND I HAVE A SON NOT MUCH YOUNGER THAN YOURS, WE CAN UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH.
THE FANTASTIC FOUR ISN'T A GROUP OF SUPER POLICEMEN--WE'RE PEOPLE CONCERNED WITH HELPING PEOPLE.
PLEASE BELIEVE US, WE WANT TO HELP!
I'M SORRY I SAID WHAT I DID. I DIDN'T KNOW--
CAN YOU REALLY MAKE WILLIE JR. WELL AGAIN--?
YOU HAVE A LOT ON YOUR MIND. I UNDERSTAND..
WE CAN ONLY TRY.
THE COMATRON IS WORKING WELL, I SEE.
ALL HIS BODILY FUNCTIONS ARE MONITORED AND COMPUTER-ANALYZED INSTANTLY...
ANY CONCLUSIONS?
NONE... NOT YET, ANYHOW.

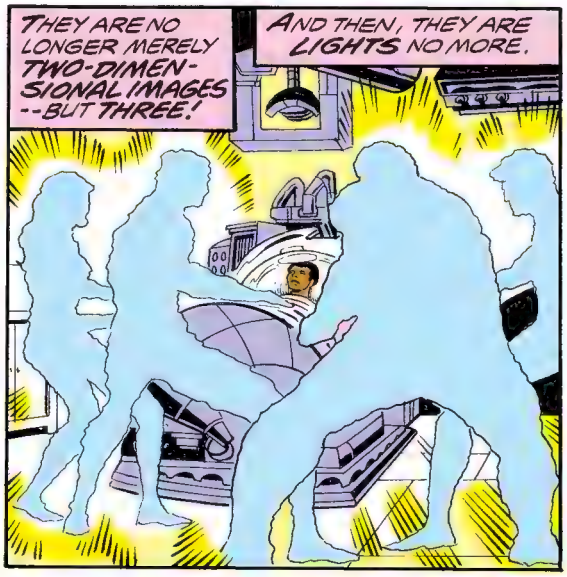

LET ME RUN A FEW TESTS... I'LL NEED A READ-OUT ON HIS D.N.A. CELL ALTERATION...
FOR HALF AN HOUR, REED WORKS WITH THE COMATRON'S BUILT-IN COMPUTER. THEN, GAINING THE INFORMATION HE NEEDS, HE LEAVES...
BUT HAD REED LINGERED A SHORT WHILE LONGER, PERHAPS HE WOULD HAVE NOTICED A CHILD'S CLOSED EYES BEGIN TO GLOW...
...AND UNMOVING LIPS MUTTER FITFULLY IN HIS SLEEP...
FANTASTIC FOUR... FANTASTIC FOUR... FANTASTIC FOUR...
WILLIE SHUDDERS AS A FEVERISH PALLOR SWEEPS ACROSS HIS YOUNG FACE...

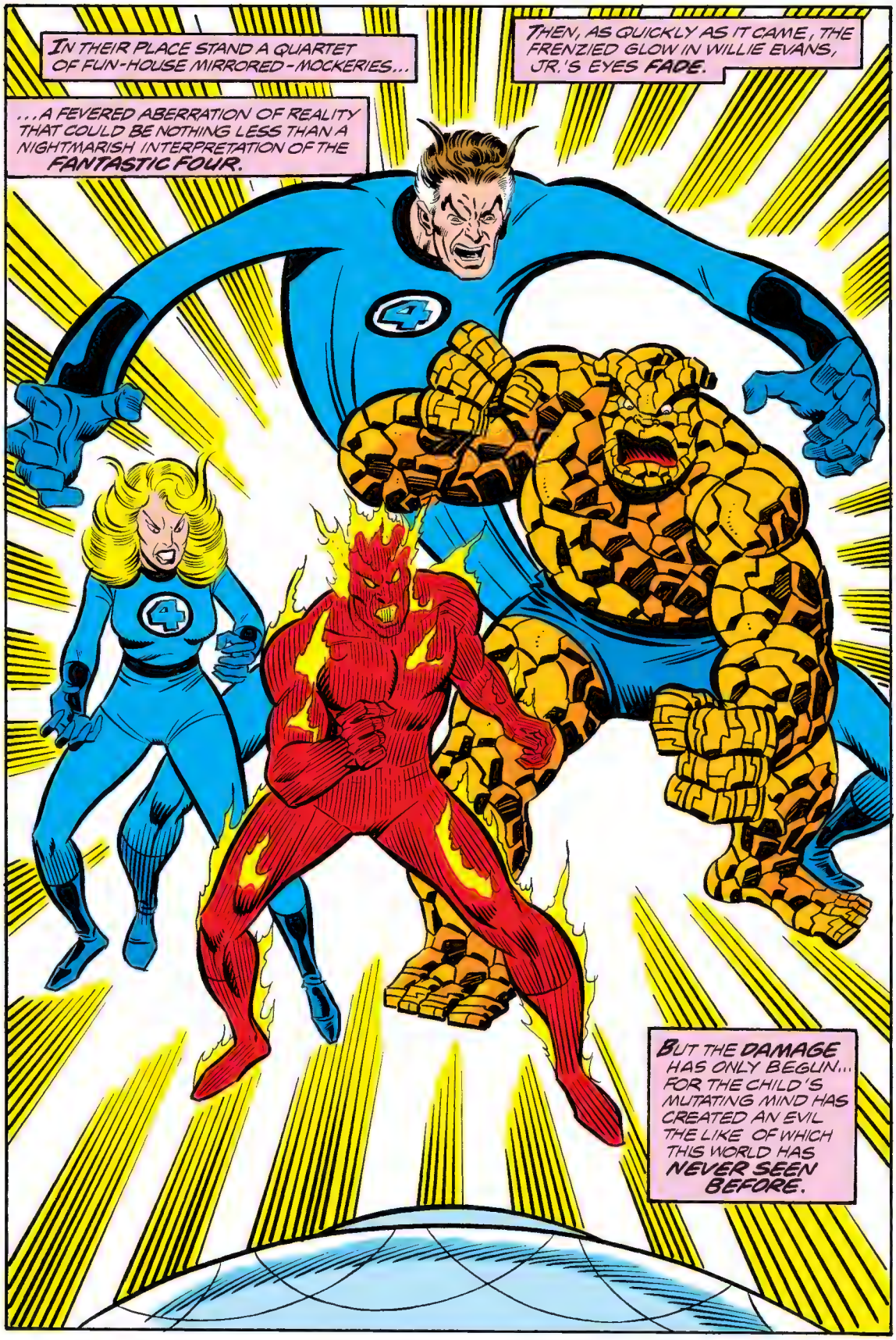

...AS AZURE-COLORED LIGHTS TWINKLE INTO VIEW...
THEY HOVER...GLOW...
FANTASTIC FOUR... FANTASTIC FOUR... FANTASTIC FOUR...

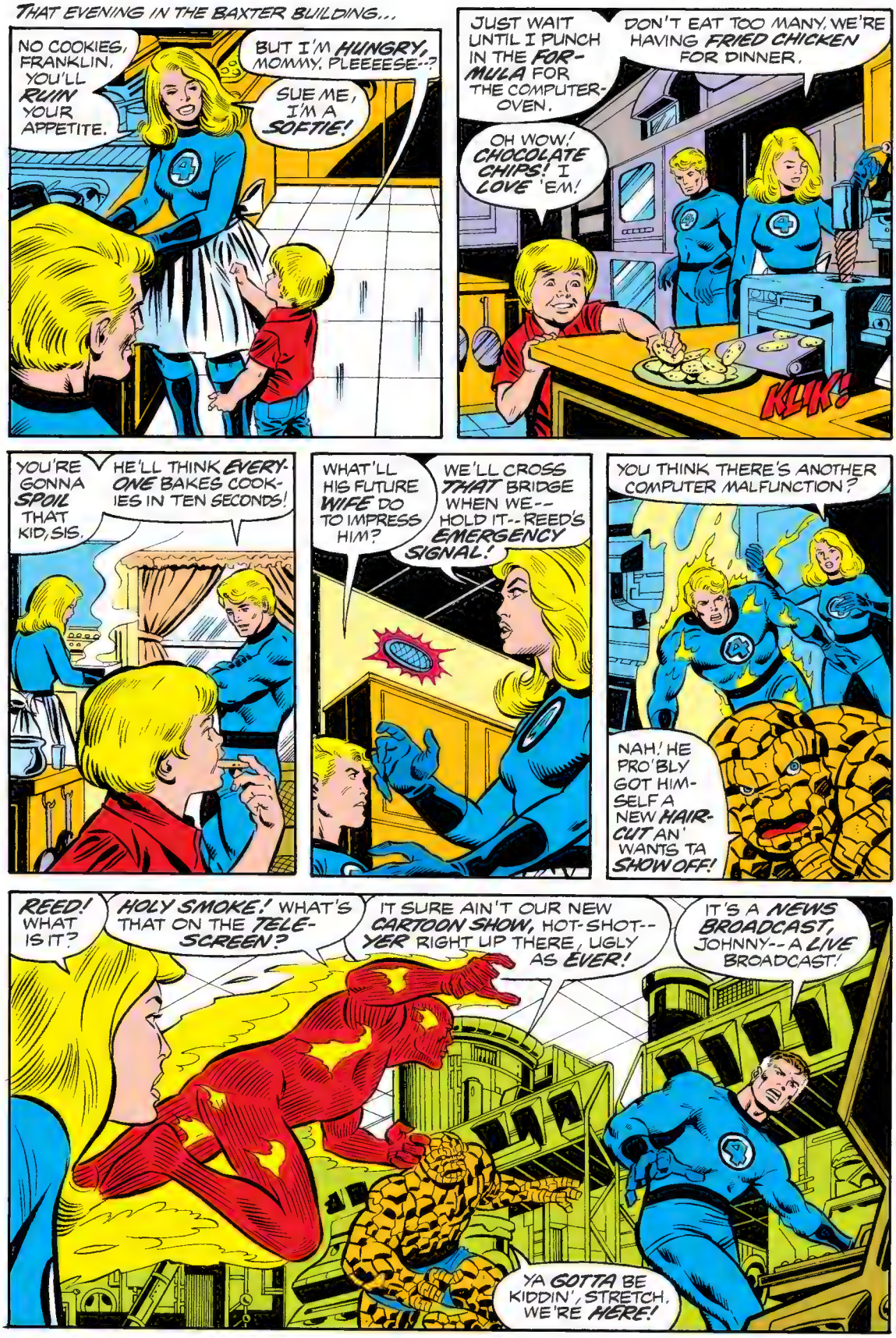

...THEN, LIKE OBSCENE GHOSTS ON A MALFUNCTIONING T.V.--

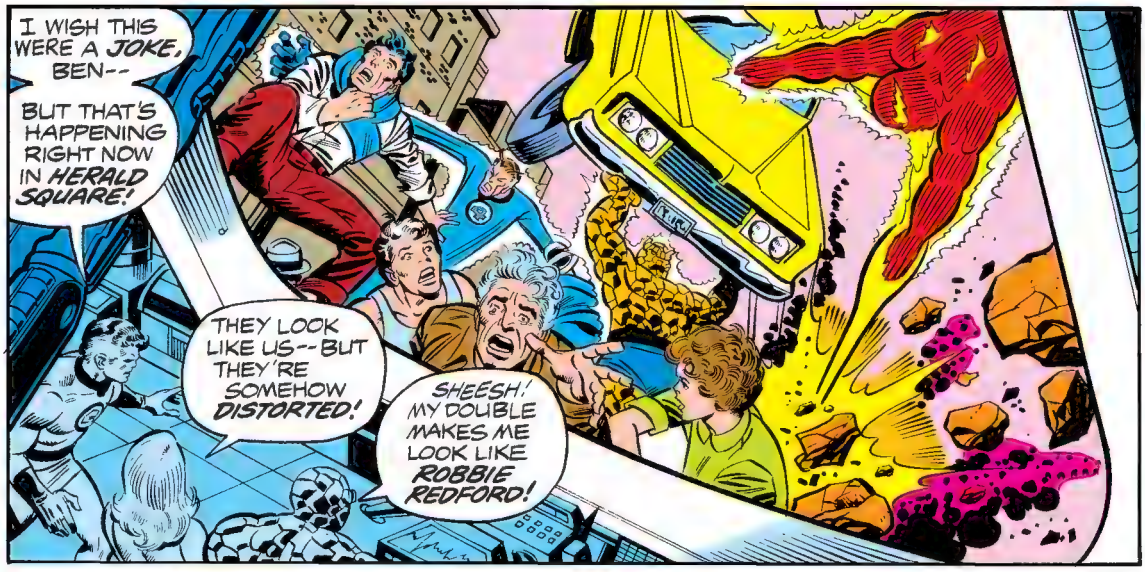
--THEY MOVE ALMOST UNNOTICED. BUT STILL, THEY EXIST!
...FANTASTIC FOUR... FANTASTIC FOUR... FANTASTIC FOUR...

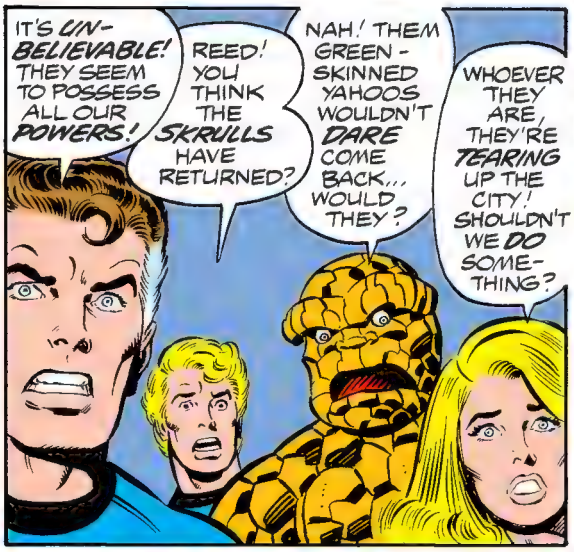

HIS FACE GLISTENS WITH SWEAT, HIS LIPS WRENCH APART, HIS INNOCENT VOICE BOOMS CANNONLIKE INTO THE SOUND-PROOF COCOON...
FANTASTIC FOUR...FANTASTIC FOUR... FANTASTIC FOUR...
THE LIGHTS BEND, TWIST, FORMING, TURNING... THEY ASSUME SHAPE AND SUBSTANCE.

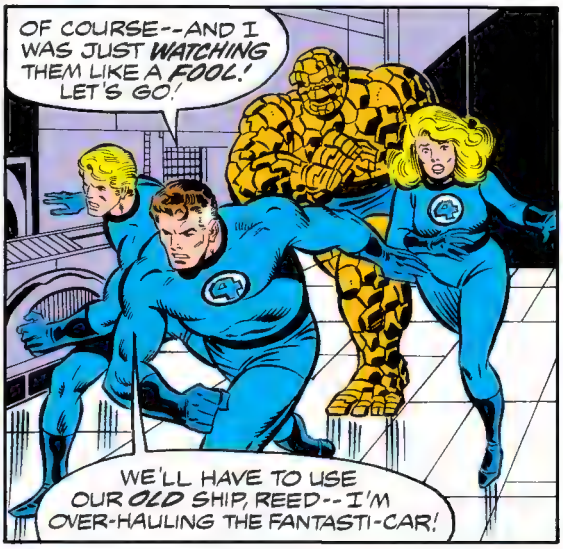

THEY ARE NO LONGER MERELY TWO-DIMENSIONAL IMAGES --BUT THREE!
AND THEN, THEY ARE LIGHTS NO MORE.

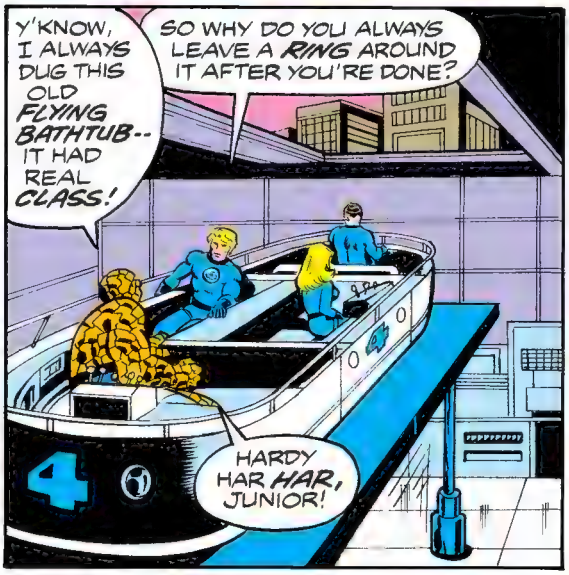

IN THEIR PLACE STAND A QUARTET OF FUN-HOUSE MIRRORED-MOCKERIES...
...A FEVERED ABERRATION OF REALITY THAT COULD BE NOTHING LESS THAN A NIGHTMARISH INTERPRETATION OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
THEN, AS QUICKLY AS IT CAME, THE FRENZIED GLOW IN WILLIE EVANS, JR.'S EYES FADE.
BUT THE DAMAGE HAS ONLY BEGUN... FOR THE CHILD'S MUTATING MIND HAS CREATED AN EVIL THE LIKE OF WHICH THIS WORLD HAS NEVER SEEN BEFORE.

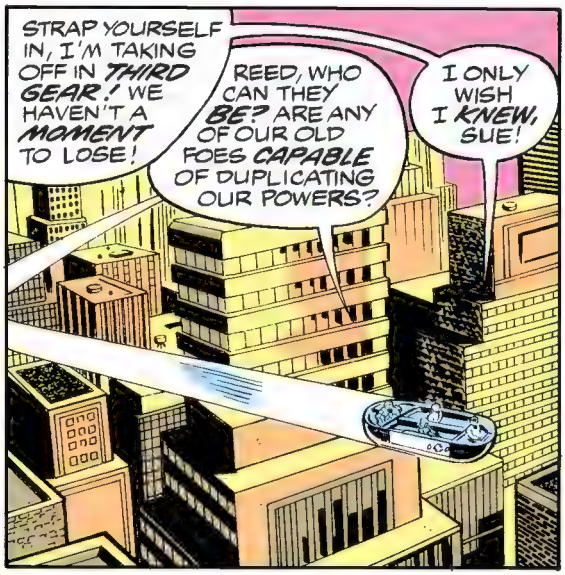

THAT EVENING IN THE BAXTER BUILDING...
NO COOKIES, FRANKLIN. YOU'LL RUIN YOUR APPETITE.
BUT I'M HUNGRY, MOMMY. PLEEEESE--?
SUE ME, I'M A SOFTIE!
JUST WAIT UNTIL I PUNCH IN THE FOR-MULA FOR THE COMPUTER-OVEN.
DON'T EAT TOO MANY. WE'RE HAVING FRIED CHICKEN FOR DINNER.
OH WOW! CHOCOLATE CHIPS! I LOVE 'EM!
KLIK!
YOU'RE GONNA SPOIL THAT KID, SIS.
HE'LL THINK EVERY-ONE BAKES COOK-IES IN TEN SECONDS!
WHAT'LL HIS FUTURE WIFE DO TO IMPRESS HIM?
WE'LL CROSS THAT BRIDGE WHEN WE-- HOLD IT--REED'S EMERGENCY SIGNAL!
YOU THINK THERE'S ANOTHER COMPUTER MALFUNCTION?
NAH! HE PRO'BLY GOT HIM-SELF A NEW HAIR-CUT AN' WANTS TA SHOW OFF!
REED! WHAT IS IT?
HOLY SMOKE! WHAT'S THAT ON THE TELE-SCREEN?
IT SURE AIN'T OUR NEW CARTOON SHOW, HOT-SHOT-- YER RIGHT UP THERE, UGLY AS EVER!
IT'S A NEWS BROADCAST, JOHNNY-- A LIVE BROADCAST!
YA GOTTA BE KIDDIN', STRETCH. WE'RE HERE!

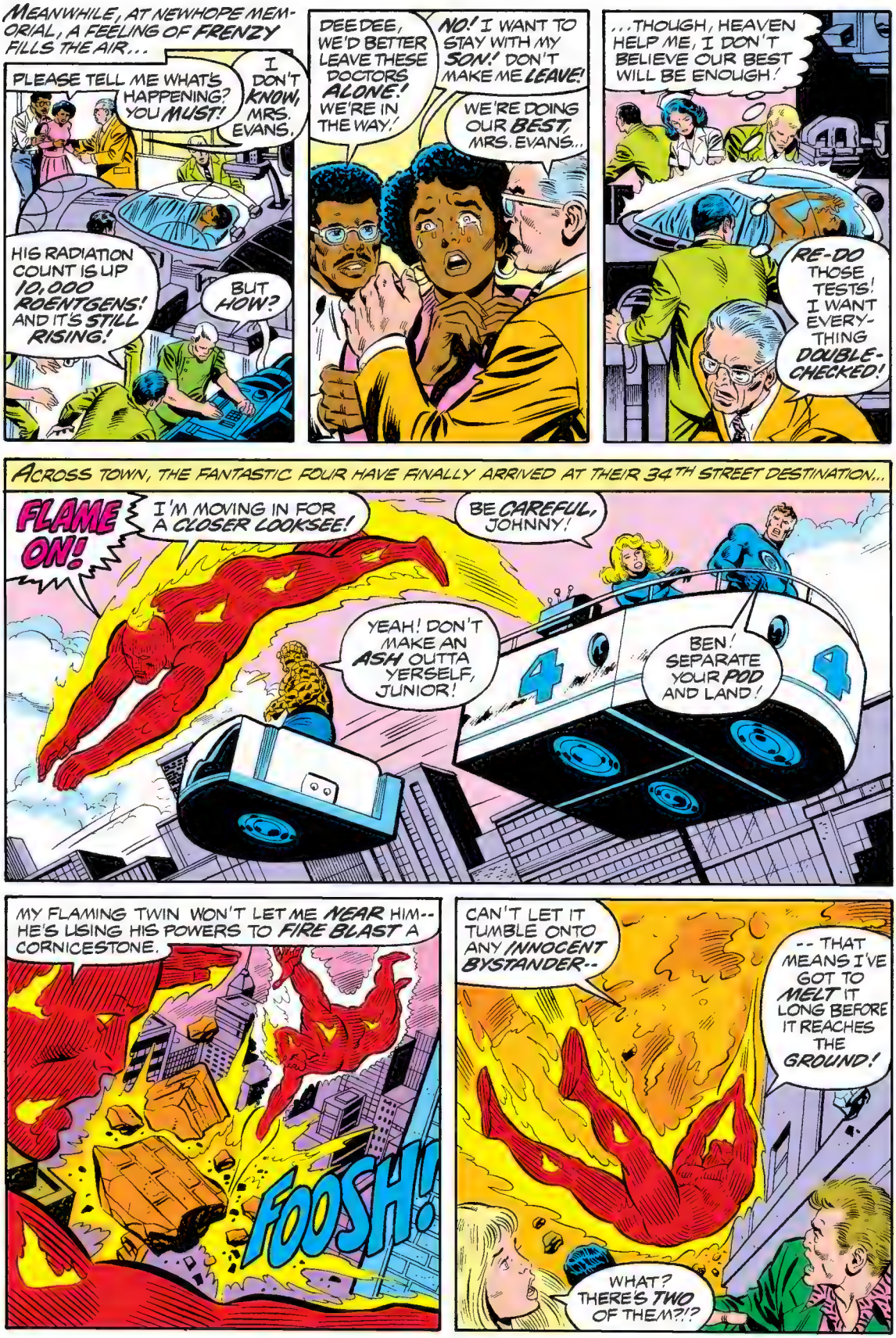

I WISH THIS WERE A JOKE, BEN--
BUT THAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW IN HERALD SQUARE!
THEY LOOK LIKE US--BUT THEY'RE SOMEHOW DISTORTED!
SHEESH! MY DOUBLE MAKES ME LOOK LIKE ROBBIE REDFORD!

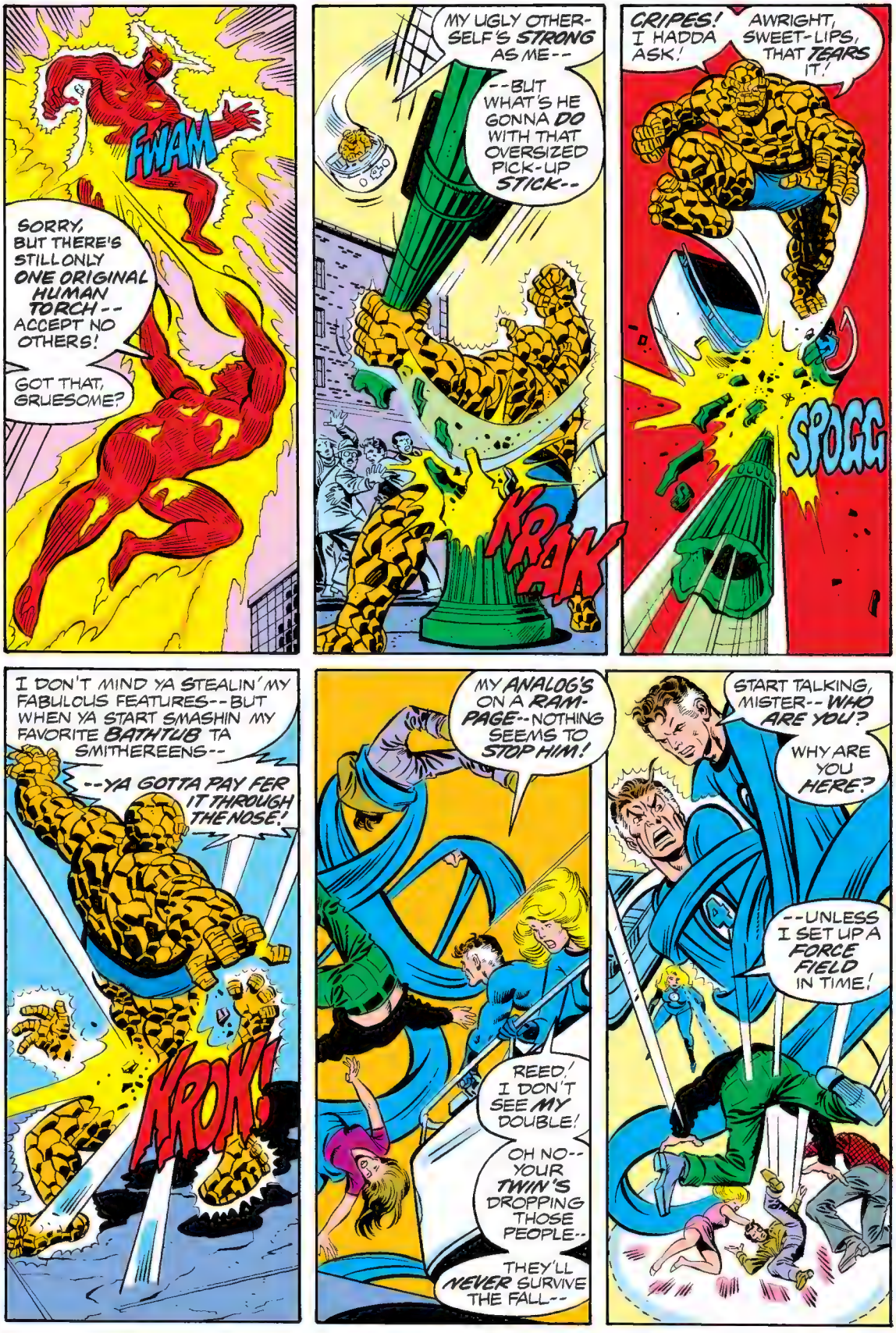

IT'S UN-BELIEVABLE! THEY SEEM TO POSSESS ALL OUR POWERS!
REED! YOU THINK THE SKRULLS HAVE RETURNED?
NAH! THEM GREEN-SKINNED YAHOOS WOULDN'T DARE COME BACK,,, WOULD THEY?
WHOEVER THEY ARE, THEY'RE TEARING UP THE CITY! SHOULDN'T WE DO SOMETHING?

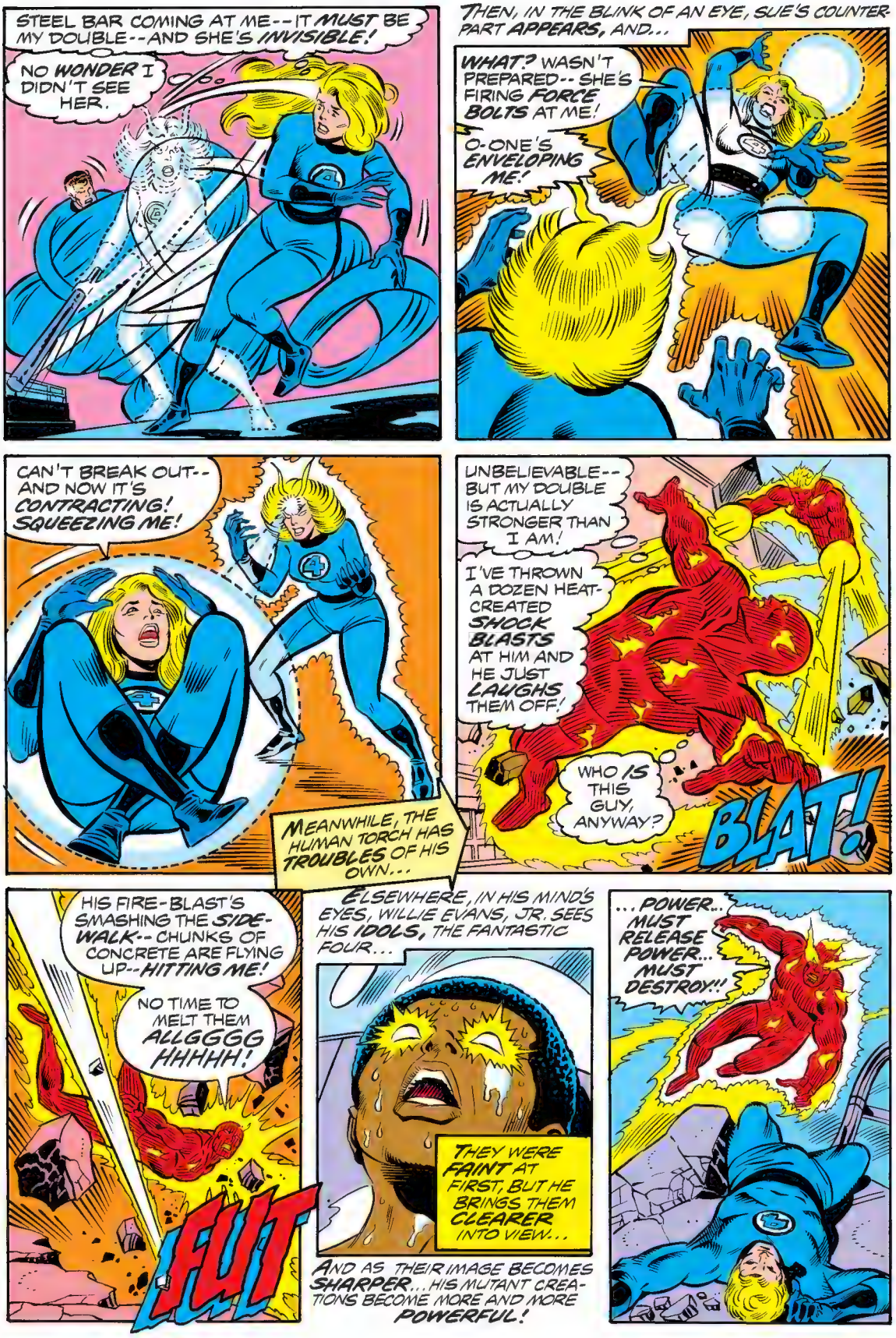

OF COURSE--AND I WAS JUST WATCHING THEM LIKE A FOOL! LET'S GO!
WE'LL HAVE TO USE OUR OLD SHIP, REED--I'M OVER-HAULING THE FANTASTI-CAR!


Y'KNOW, I ALWAYS DUG THIS OLD FLYING BATHTUB--IT HAD REAL CLASS!
SO WHY DO YOU ALWAYS LEAVE A RING AROUND IT AFTER YOU'RE DONE?
HARDY HAR HAR, JUNIOR!

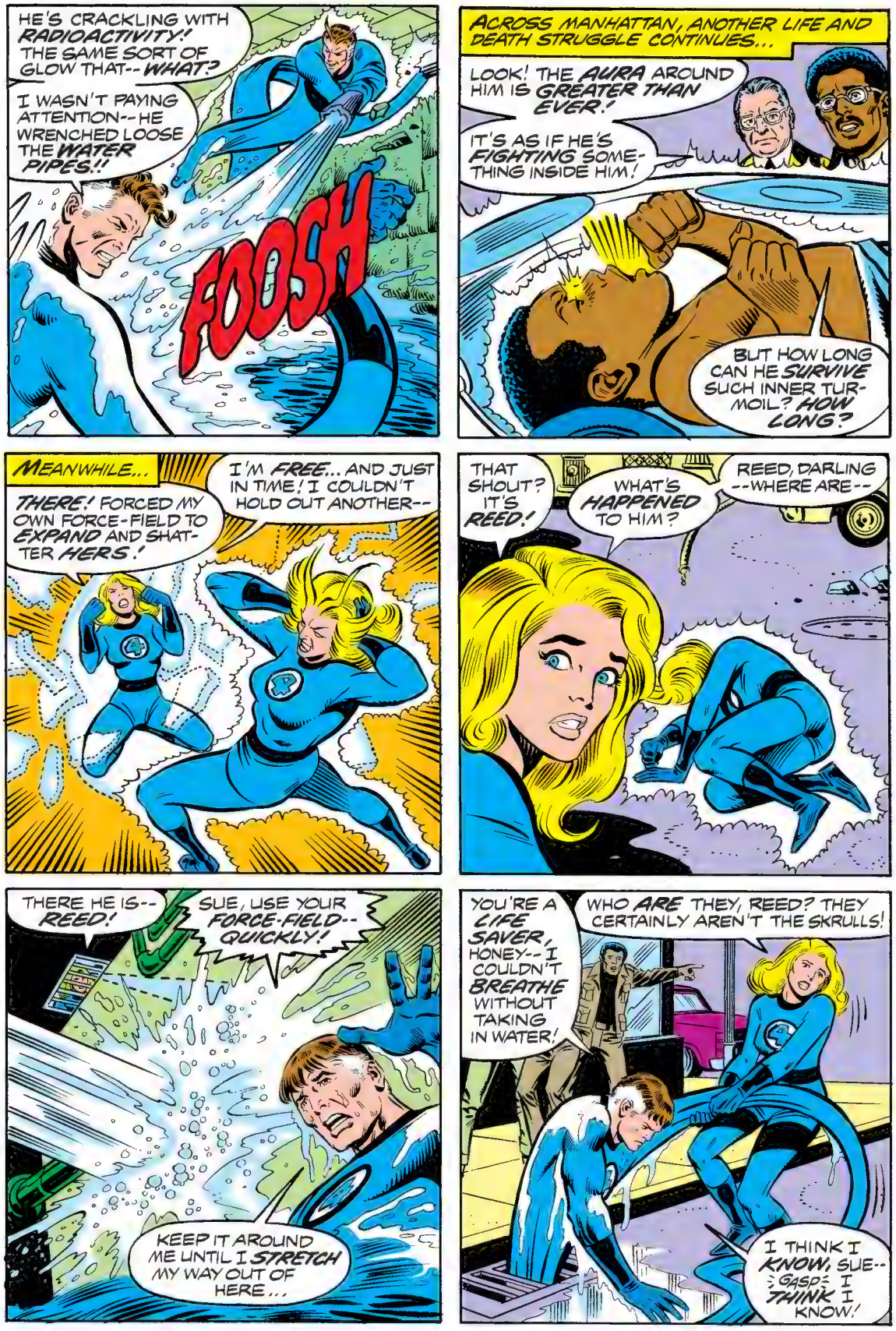

STRAP YOURSELF IN, I'M TAKING OFF IN THIRD GEAR! WE HAVEN'T A MOMENT TO LOSE!
REED, WHO CAN THEY BE? ARE ANY OF OUR OLD FOES CAPABLE OF DUPLICATING OUR POWERS?
I ONLY WISH I KNEW, SUE!

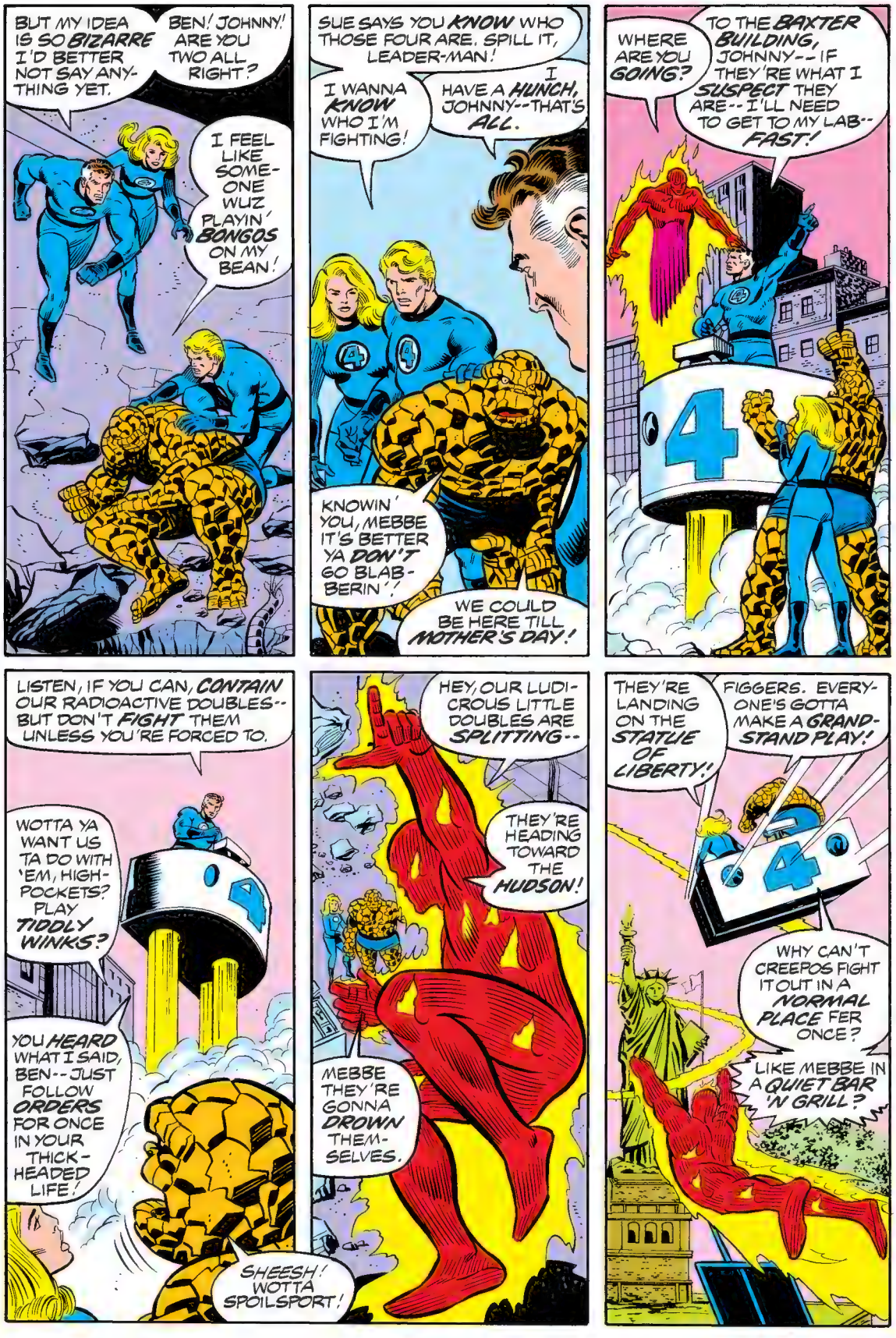

MEANWHILE, AT NEWHOPE MEMORIAL, A FEELING OF FRENZY FILLS THE AIR...
PLEASE TELL ME WHAT'S HAPPENING? YOU MUST!
I DON'T KNOW, MRS. EVANS.
HIS RADIATION COUNT IS UP 10,000 ROENTGENS! AND IT'S STILL RISING!
BUT HOW?
DEE DEE, WE'D BETTER LEAVE THESE DOCTORS ALONE! WE'RE IN THE WAY!
NO! I WANT TO STAY WITH MY SON! DON'T MAKE ME LEAVE!
WE'RE DOING OUR BEST, MRS. EVANS..
...THOUGH, HEAVEN HELP ME, I DON'T BELIEVE OUR BEST WILL BE ENOUGH!
RE-DO THOSE TESTS! I WANT EVERYTHING DOUBLE-CHECKED!
ACROSS TOWN, THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE FINALLY ARRIVED AT THEIR 34TH STREET DESTINATION...
FLAME ON!
I'M MOVING IN FOR A CLOSER LOOKSEE!
BE CAREFUL, JOHNNY!
YEAH! DON'T MAKE AN ASH OUTTA YERSELF, JUNIOR!
BEN! SEPARATE YOUR POD AND LAND!
MY FLAMING TWIN WON'T LET ME NEAR HIM-- HE'S USING HIS POWERS TO FIRE BLAST A CORNICESTONE.
FOOSH!
CAN'T LET IT TUMBLE ONTO ANY INNOCENT BYSTANDER--
-- THAT MEANS I'VE GOT TO MELT IT LONG BEFORE IT REACHES THE GROUND!
WHAT? THERE'S TWO OF THEM?!?

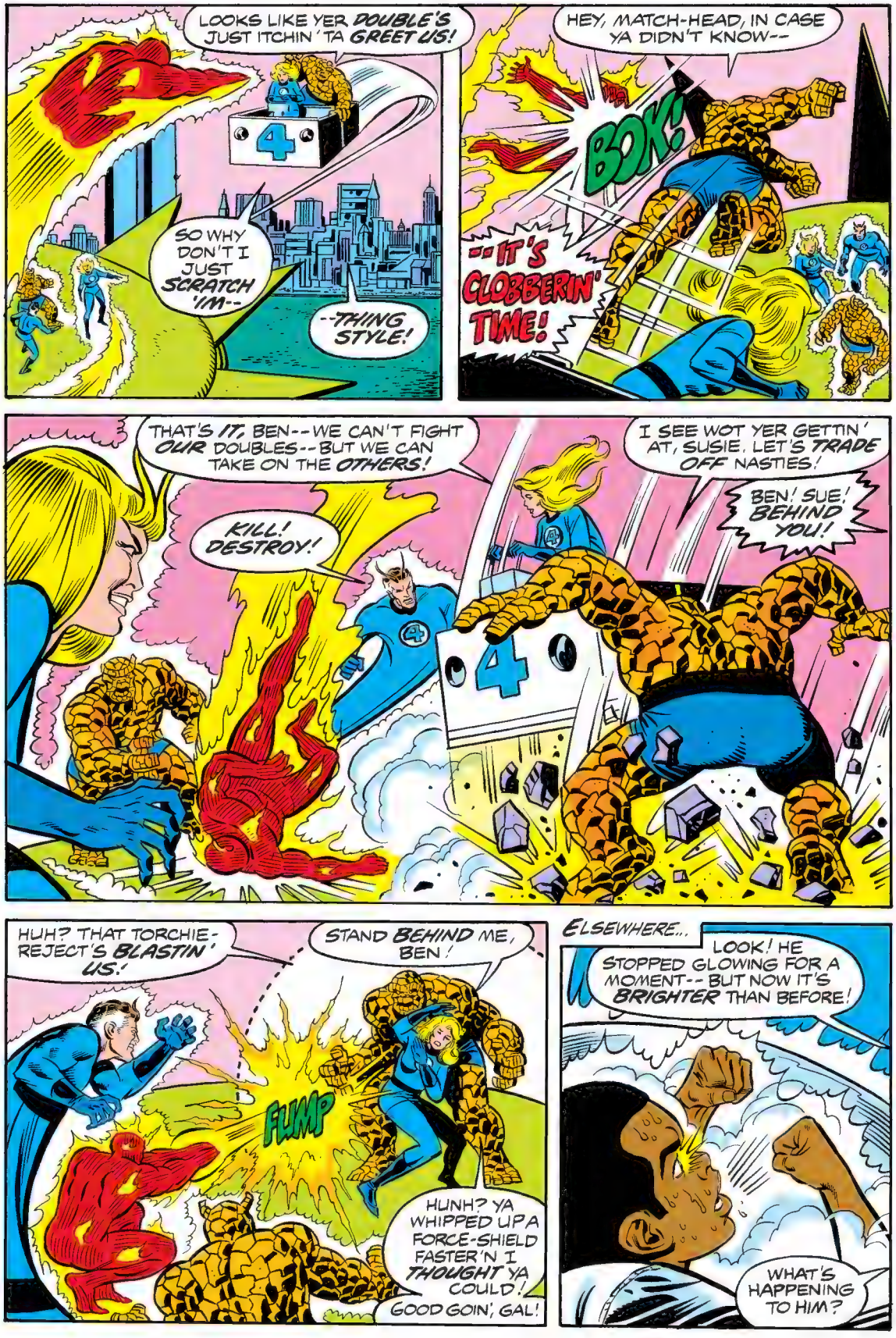

FWAM
SORRY, BUT THERE'S STILL ONLY ONE ORIGINAL HUMAN TORCH -- ACCEPT NO OTHERS!
GOT THAT, GRUESOME?
MY UGLY OTHER-SELF'S STRONG AS ME--
--BUT WHAT'S HE GONNA DO WITH THAT OVERSIZED PICK-UP STICK--
KRAK
CRIPES! I HADDA ASK!
AWRIGHT, SWEET-LIPS, THAT TEARS IT!
SPOGG
I DON'T MIND YA STEALIN' MY FABULOUS FEATURES--BUT WHEN YA START SMASHIN MY FAVORITE BATHTUB TA SMITHEREENS--
--YA GOTTA PAY FER IT THROUGH THE NOSE!
KROK!
MY ANALOG'S ON A RAMPAGE--NOTHING SEEMS TO STOP HIM!
REED! I DON'T SEE MY DOUBLE!
OH NO-- YOUR TWIN'S DROPPING THOSE PEOPLE--
THEY'LL NEVER SURVIVE THE FALL--
START TALKING, MISTER-- WHO ARE YOU?
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
--UNLESS I SET UP A FORCE FIELD IN TIME!

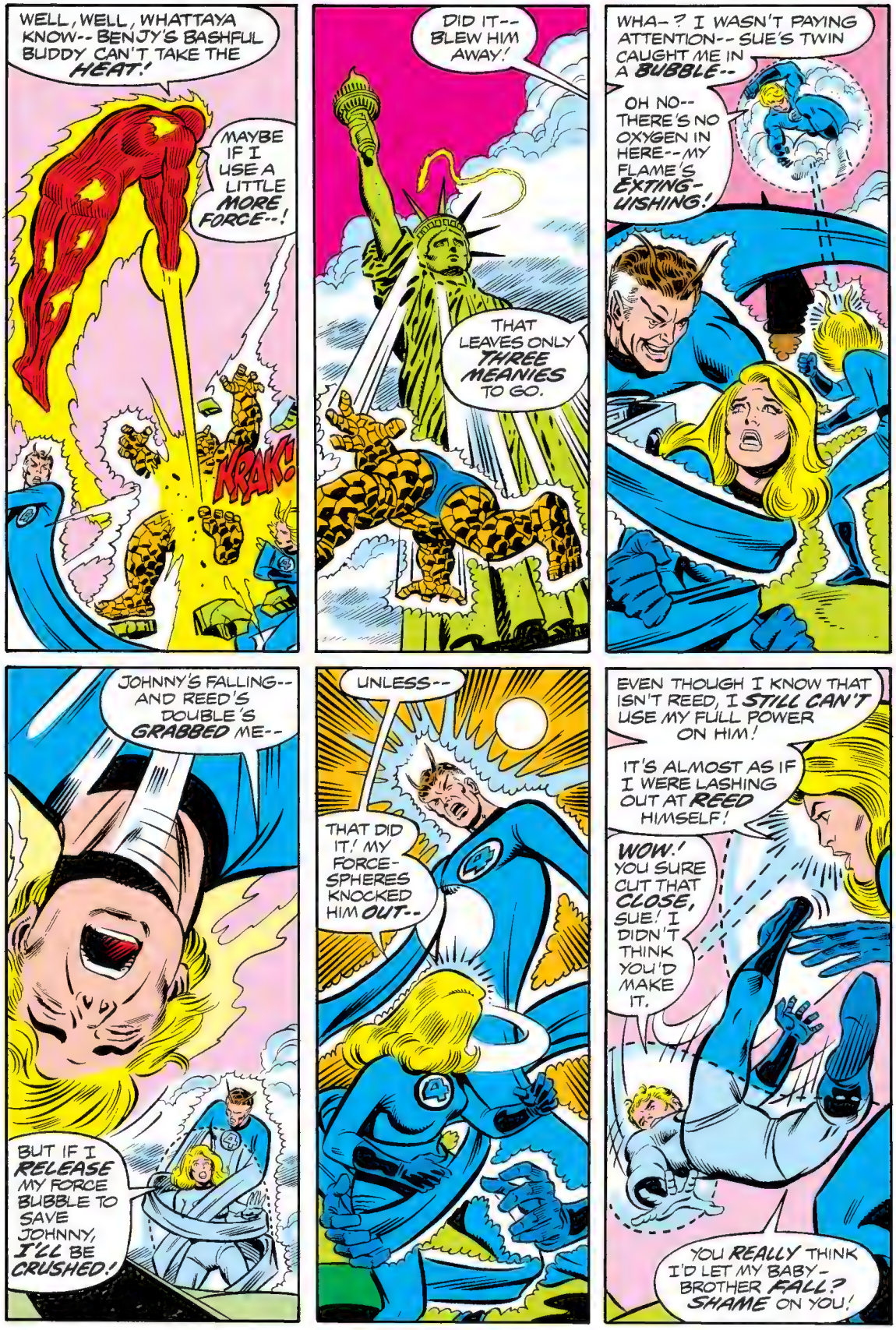

STEEL BAR COMING AT ME--IT MUST BE MY DOUBLE--AND SHE'S INVISIBLE!
NO WONDER I DIDN'T SEE HER.
THEN, IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, SUE'S COUNTERPART APPEARS, AND...
WHAT? WASN'T PREPARED-- SHE'S FIRING FORCE BOLTS AT ME!
O-ONE'S ENVELOPING ME!
CAN'T BREAK OUT-- AND NOW IT'S CONTRACTING! SQUEEZING ME!
MEANWHILE, THE HUMAN TORCH HAS TROUBLES OF HIS OWN...
UNBELIEVABLE-- BUT MY DOUBLE IS ACTUALLY STRONGER THAN I AM!
I'VE THROWN A DOZEN HEAT-CREATED SHOCK BLASTS AT HIM AND HE JUST LAUGHS THEM OFF!
WHO IS THIS GUY, ANYWAY?
BLAT!
HIS FIRE-BLAST'S SMASHING THE SIDEWALK-- CHUNKS OF CONCRETE ARE FLYING UP--HITTING ME!
NO TIME TO MELT THEM ALLGGGG HHHHH!
FUT
ELSEWHERE, IN HIS MIND'S EYES, WILLIE EVANS, JR. SEES HIS IDOLS, THE FANTASTIC FOUR...
THEY WERE FAINT AT FIRST, BUT HE BRINGS THEM CLEARER INTO VIEW...
AND AS THEIR IMAGE BECOMES SHARPER...HIS MUTANT CREATIONS BECOME MORE AND MORE POWERFUL!
...POWER... MUST RELEASE POWER... MUST DESTROY!!

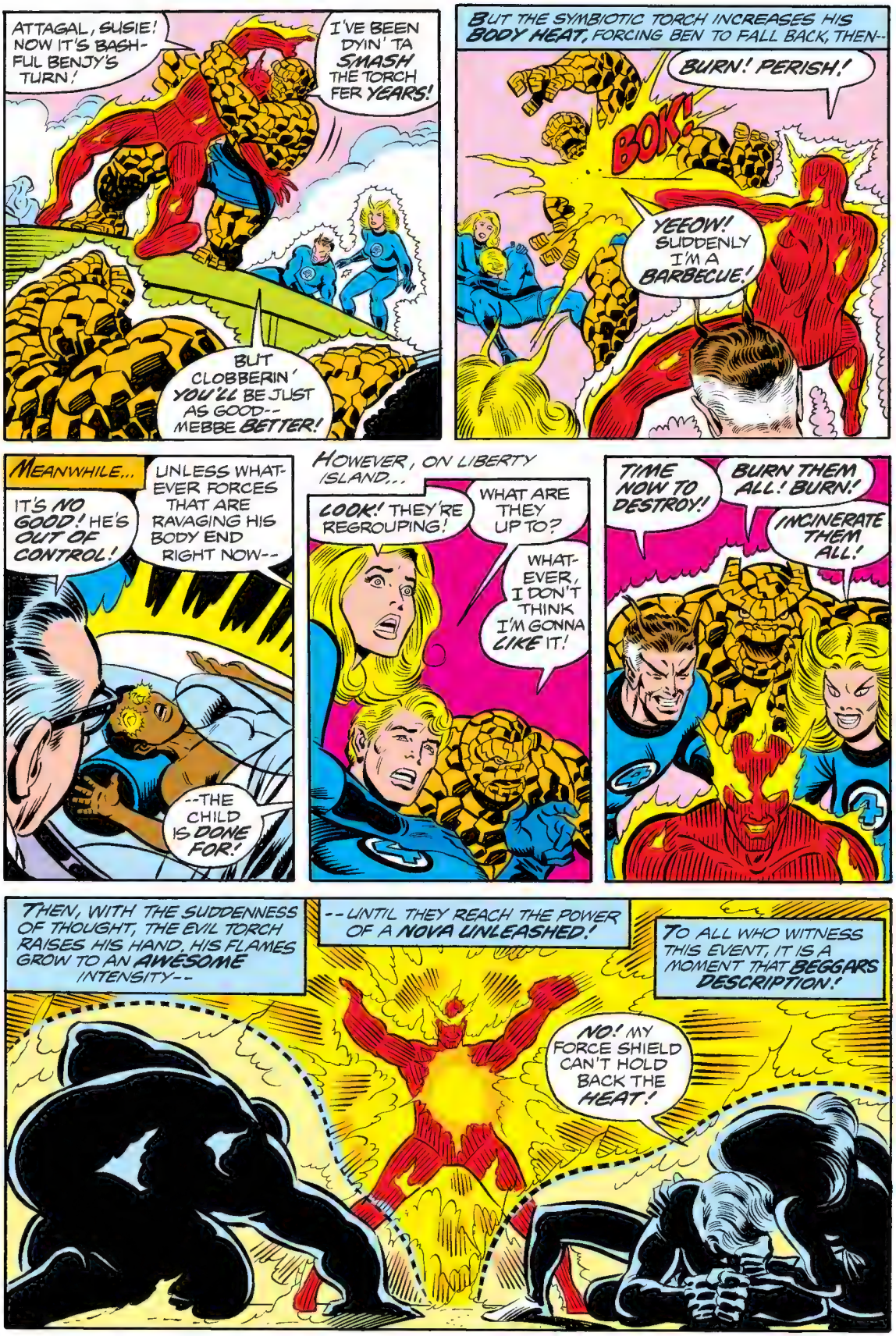
CRIPES! IT'S LIKE FIGHTIN' MYSELF-- ONLY HE'S CLOBBERIN' ME!
HOW'D HE GET SO STRONG ALLUVA SUDDEN?
MUST SMASH... SMASH EVERY-THING!
WAM!
WHAD YOU SAY, UGGUMS? YOU GONNA TEAR ME APART?
NO WAY, HAPPY-BOY-- FORGET IT!
I DON'T PLAN ON DYIN' FER YEARS-- MEBBE NEVER!
BTAM
WOTTA YA KNOW, I ACTUALLY BELTED 'IM ONE!
ONLY HE SEEMS TA BE REACHIN' FER--
WHAA--? HE'S SHOVIN' THE ELECTRIC CABLES INTA ME!
I'M SIZZLIN' ALL OVER!!
BUT I CAN'T PASS OUT... WON'T LET MYSELF FALL...
SKUNCH
ZZZTAT
ASTOUNDING! HE ANTICIPATES MY EVERY MOVE! THEN HE COUNTER-ACTS IT!
WHAT'S MORE, HE ISN'T GETTING WEAKER-- IF ANYTHING, HIS STRENGTH'S INCREASING!
WHAT? HE'S HEADING INTO THAT SEWER GRATING? BUT WHY?
I WILL DESTROY YOU! DESTROY!
HUNH? IN THE DARKNESS I SEE SOMETHING I HADN'T NOTICED BEFORE--

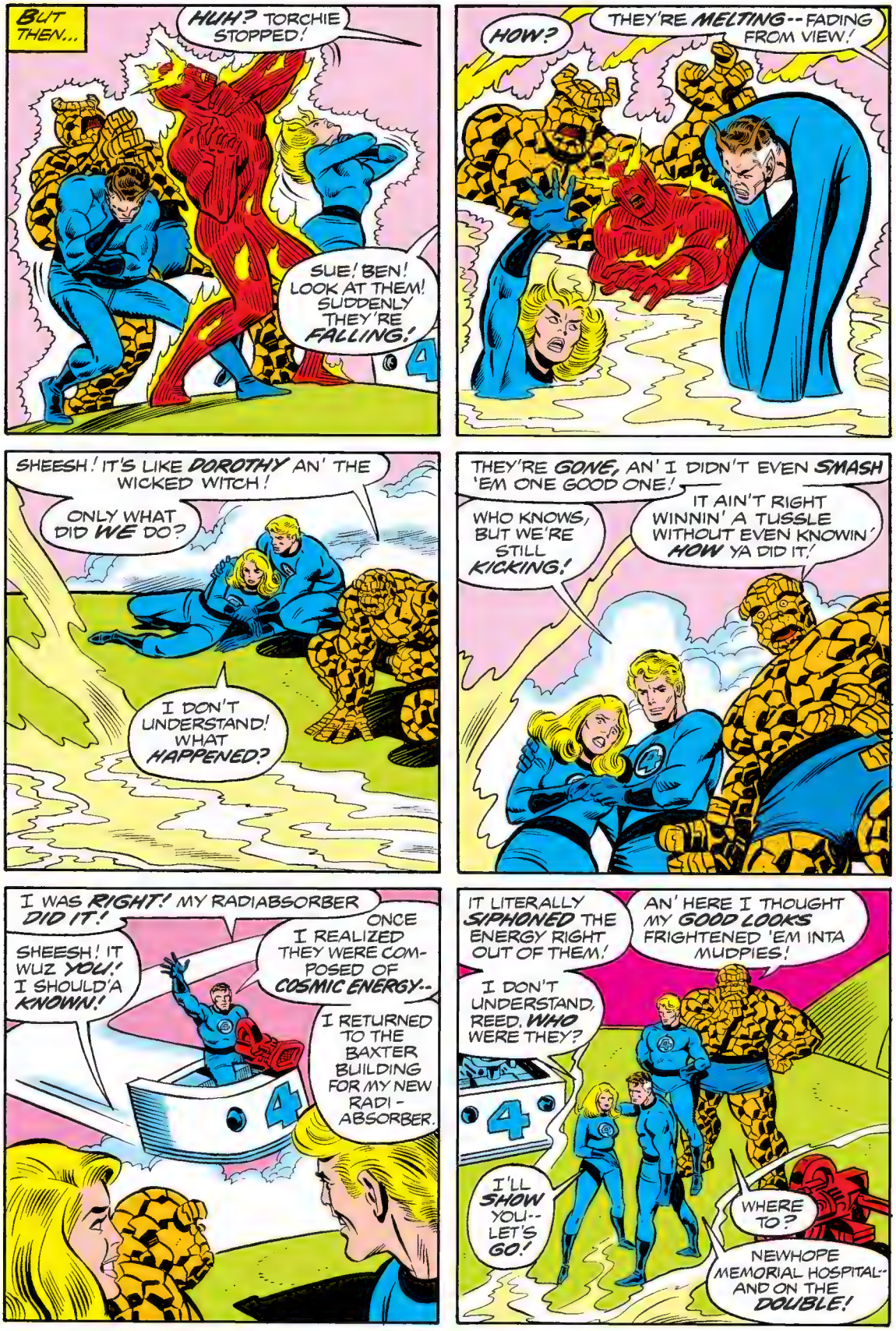

HE'S CRACKLING WITH RADIOACTIVITY! THE SAME SORT OF GLOW THAT-- WHAT?
I WASN'T PAYING ATTENTION-- HE WRENCHED LOOSE THE WATER PIPES!!
FOOSH
ACROSS MANHATTAN, ANOTHER LIFE AND DEATH STRUGGLE CONTINUES...
LOOK! THE AURA AROUND HIM IS GREATER THAN EVER!
IT'S AS IF HE'S FIGHTING SOMETHING INSIDE HIM!
BUT HOW LONG CAN HE SURVIVE SUCH INNER TURMOIL? HOW LONG?
MEANWHILE...
I'M FREE... AND JUST IN TIME! I COULDN'T HOLD OUT ANOTHER--
THERE! FORCED MY OWN FORCE-FIELD TO EXPAND AND SHATTER HERS!
THAT SHOUT? IT'S REED!
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM?
REED, DARLING --WHERE ARE--
THERE HE IS-- REED!
SUE, USE YOUR FORCE-FIELD-- QUICKLY!
KEEP IT AROUND ME UNTIL I STRETCH MY WAY OUT OF HERE...
YOU'RE A LIFE SAVER, HONEY-- I COULDN'T BREATHE WITHOUT TAKING IN WATER!
WHO ARE THEY, REED? THEY CERTAINLY AREN'T THE SKRULLS!
I THINK I KNOW, SUE-- GASP! I THINK I KNOW!

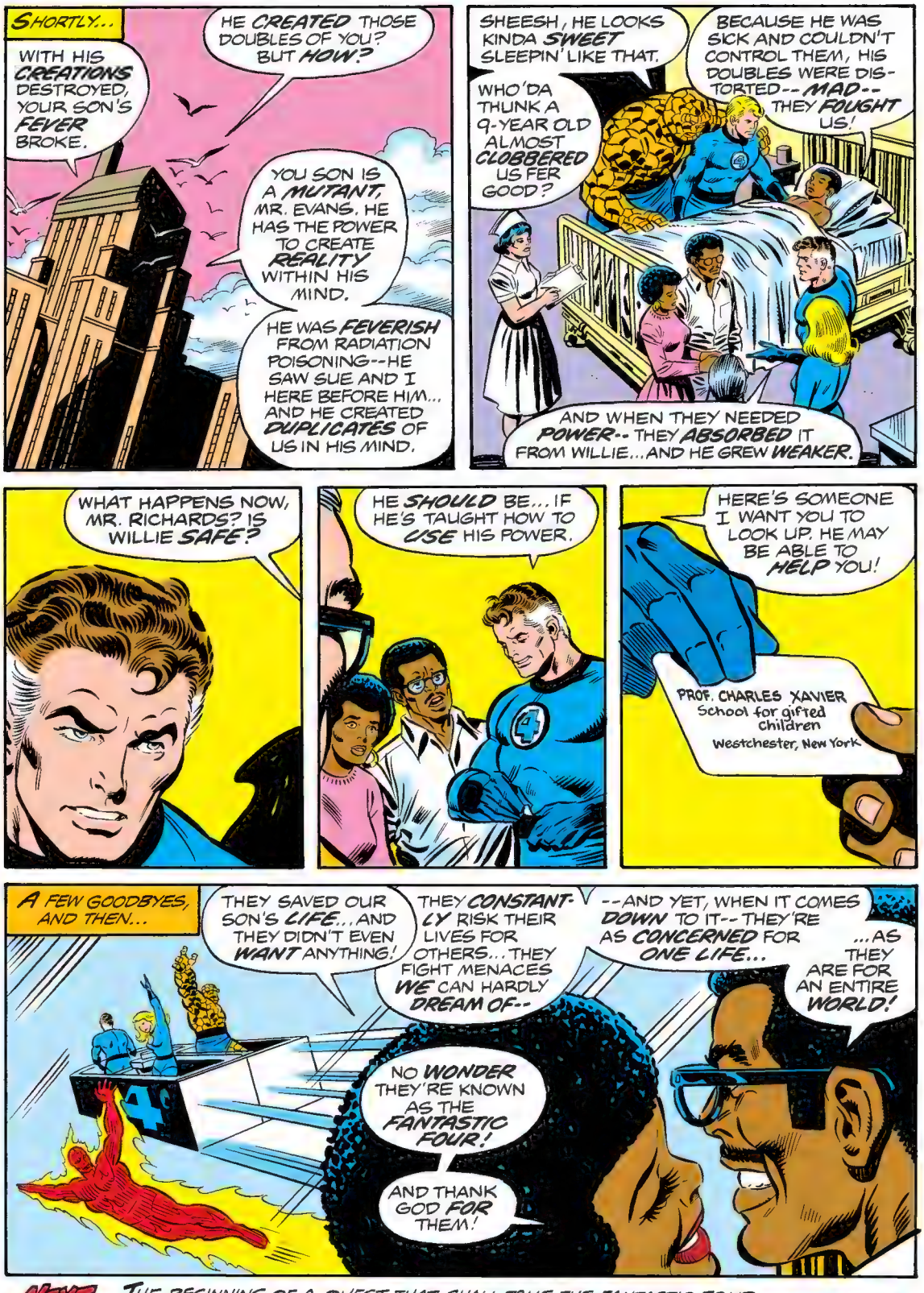

BUT MY IDEA IS SO BIZARRE I'D BETTER NOT SAY ANYTHING YET.
BEN! JOHNNY! ARE YOU TWO ALL RIGHT?
I FEEL LIKE SOMEONE WUZ PLAYIN' BONGOS ON MY BEAN!
SUE SAYS YOU KNOW WHO THOSE FOUR ARE. SPILL IT, LEADER-MAN!
I WANNA KNOW WHO I'M FIGHTING!
I HAVE A HUNCH, JOHNNY--THAT'S ALL.
KNOWIN' YOU, MEBBE IT'S BETTER YA DON'T GO BLABBERIN'!
WE COULD BE HERE TILL MOTHER'S DAY!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO THE BAXTER BUILDING, JOHNNY--IF THEY'RE WHAT I SUSPECT THEY ARE--I'LL NEED TO GET TO MY LAB--FAST!
LISTEN, IF YOU CAN, CONTAIN OUR RADIOACTIVE DOUBLES--BUT DON'T FIGHT THEM UNLESS YOU'RE FORCED TO.
WOTTA YA WANT US TA DO WITH 'EM, HIGH-POCKETS? PLAY TIDDLY WINKS?
YOU HEARD WHAT I SAID, BEN--JUST FOLLOW ORDERS FOR ONCE IN YOUR THICK-HEADED LIFE!
SHEESH! WOTTA SPOILSPORT!
HEY, OUR LUDICROUS LITTLE DOUBLES ARE SPLITTING--
THEY'RE HEADING TOWARD THE HUDSON!
MEBBE THEY'RE GONNA DROWN THEMSELVES.
THEY'RE LANDING ON THE STATUE OF LIBERTY!
FIGGERS. EVERYONE'S GOTTA MAKE A GRANDSTAND PLAY!
WHY CAN'T CREEPOS FIGHT IT OUT IN A NORMAL PLACE FER ONCE?
LIKE MEBBE IN A QUIET BAR 'N GRILL?


LOOKS LIKE YER DOUBLE'S JUST ITCHIN' TA GREET US!
SO WHY DON'T I JUST SCRATCH 'IM--
--THING STYLE!
HEY, MATCH-HEAD, IN CASE YA DIDN'T KNOW--
BOK!
--IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!
THAT'S IT, BEN--WE CAN'T FIGHT OUR DOUBLES--BUT WE CAN TAKE ON THE OTHERS!
KILL! DESTROY!
I SEE WOT YER GETTIN' AT, SUSIE. LET'S TRADE OFF NASTIES!
BEN! SUE! BEHIND YOU!
HUH? THAT TORCHIE-REJECT'S BLASTIN' US!
STAND BEHIND ME, BEN!
FLUMP
HUNH? YA WHIPPED UP A FORCE-SHIELD FASTER'N I THOUGHT YA COULD!
GOOD GOIN', GAL!
ELSEWHERE...
LOOK! HE STOPPED GLOWING FOR A MOMENT--BUT NOW IT'S BRIGHTER THAN BEFORE!
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO HIM?


WELL, WELL, WHATTAYA KNOW-- BENJY'S BASHFUL BUDDY CAN'T TAKE THE HEAT!
MAYBE IF I USE A LITTLE MORE FORCE--!
KRAK!
DID IT-- BLEW HIM AWAY!
THAT LEAVES ONLY THREE MEANIES TO GO.
WHA-? I WASN'T PAYING ATTENTION-- SUE'S TWIN CAUGHT ME IN A BUBBLE--
OH NO-- THERE'S NO OXYGEN IN HERE-- MY FLAME'S EXTING-UISHING!
JOHNNY'S FALLING-- AND REED'S DOUBLE'S GRABBED ME--
BUT IF I RELEASE MY FORCE BUBBLE TO SAVE JOHNNY, I'LL BE CRUSHED!
UNLESS--
THAT DID IT! MY FORCE-SPHERES KNOCKED HIM OUT--
EVEN THOUGH I KNOW THAT ISN'T REED, I STILL CAN'T USE MY FULL POWER ON HIM!
IT'S ALMOST AS IF I WERE LASHING OUT AT REED HIMSELF!
WOW! YOU SURE CUT THAT CLOSE, SUE! I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D MAKE IT.
YOU REALLY THINK I'D LET MY BABY-BROTHER FALL? SHAME ON YOU!


ATTAGAL, SUSIE! NOW IT'S BASHFUL BENJY'S TURN!
I'VE BEEN DYIN' TA SMASH THE TORCH FER YEARS!
BUT CLOBBERIN' YOU'LL BE JUST AS GOOD-- MEBBE BETTER!
BUT THE SYMBIOTIC TORCH INCREASES HIS BODY HEAT, FORCING BEN TO FALL BACK, THEN--
BURN! PERISH!
BOK!
YEEOW! SUDDENLY I'M A BARBECUE!
MEANWHILE...
IT'S NO GOOD! HE'S OUT OF CONTROL!
UNLESS WHATEVER FORCES THAT ARE RAVAGING HIS BODY END RIGHT NOW--
--THE CHILD IS DONE FOR!
HOWEVER, ON LIBERTY ISLAND...
LOOK! THEY'RE REGROUPING!
WHAT ARE THEY UP TO?
WHATEVER, I DON'T THINK I'M GONNA LIKE IT!
TIME NOW TO DESTROY!
BURN THEM ALL! BURN!
INCINERATE THEM ALL!
THEN, WITH THE SUDDENNESS OF THOUGHT, THE EVIL TORCH RAISES HIS HAND. HIS FLAMES GROW TO AN AWESOME INTENSITY--
--UNTIL THEY REACH THE POWER OF A NOVA UNLEASHED!
TO ALL WHO WITNESS THIS EVENT, IT IS A MOMENT THAT BEGGARS DESCRIPTION!
NO! MY FORCE SHIELD CAN'T HOLD BACK THE HEAT!


BUT THEN...
HUH? TORCHIE STOPPED!
SUE! BEN! LOOK AT THEM! SUDDENLY THEY'RE FALLING!
HOW?
THEY'RE MELTING--FADING FROM VIEW!
SHEESH! IT'S LIKE DOROTHY AN' THE WICKED WITCH!
ONLY WHAT DID WE DO?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND! WHAT HAPPENED?
THEY'RE GONE, AN' I DIDN'T EVEN SMASH 'EM ONE GOOD ONE!
WHO KNOWS, BUT WE'RE STILL KICKING!
IT AIN'T RIGHT WINNIN' A TUSSLE WITHOUT EVEN KNOWIN' HOW YA DID IT.
I WAS RIGHT! MY RADIABSORBER DID IT!
SHEESH! IT WUZ YOU! I SHOULD'A KNOWN!
ONCE I REALIZED THEY WERE COMPOSED OF COSMIC ENERGY--
I RETURNED TO THE BAXTER BUILDING FOR MY NEW RADI-ABSORBER.
IT LITERALLY SIPHONED THE ENERGY RIGHT OUT OF THEM!
AN' HERE I THOUGHT MY GOOD LOOKS FRIGHTENED 'EM INTA MUDPIES!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND, REED. WHO WERE THEY?
I'LL SHOW YOU-- LET'S GO!
WHERE TO?
NEWHOPE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL-- AND ON THE DOUBLE!


SHORTLY...
WITH HIS CREATIONS DESTROYED, YOUR SON'S FEVER BROKE.
HE CREATED THOSE DOUBLES OF YOU? BUT HOW?
YOU SON IS A MUTANT, MR. EVANS. HE HAS THE POWER TO CREATE REALITY WITHIN HIS MIND.
HE WAS FEVERISH FROM RADIATION POISONING--HE SAW SUE AND I HERE BEFORE HIM... AND HE CREATED DUPLICATES OF US IN HIS MIND.
SHEESH, HE LOOKS KINDA SWEET SLEEPIN' LIKE THAT.
WHO'DA THUNK A 9-YEAR OLD ALMOST CLOBBERED US FER GOOD?
BECAUSE HE WAS SICK AND COULDN'T CONTROL THEM, HIS DOUBLES WERE DISTORTED-- MAD-- THEY FOUGHT US!
AND WHEN THEY NEEDED POWER-- THEY ABSORBED IT FROM WILLIE... AND HE GREW WEAKER.
WHAT HAPPENS NOW, MR. RICHARDS? IS WILLIE SAFE?
HE SHOULD BE... IF HE'S TAUGHT HOW TO USE HIS POWER.
HERE'S SOMEONE I WANT YOU TO LOOK UP. HE MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU!
PROF. CHARLES XAVIER School for gifted children Westchester, New York
A FEW GOODBYES, AND THEN...
THEY SAVED OUR SON'S LIFE... AND THEY DIDN'T EVEN WANT ANYTHING!
THEY CONSTANTLY RISK THEIR LIVES FOR OTHERS... THEY FIGHT MENACES WE CAN HARDLY DREAM OF--
--AND YET, WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT-- THEY'RE AS CONCERNED FOR ONE LIFE...
...AS THEY ARE FOR AN ENTIRE WORLD!
NO WONDER THEY'RE KNOWN AS THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
AND THANK GOD FOR THEM!

NEXT ISSUE: THE BEGINNING OF A QUEST THAT SHALL TAKE THE FANTASTIC FOUR... BEYOND THE GALAXY! THE ANDROMEDA ATTACK!

FANTASTIC FOUR
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FURY IN THE STARS!

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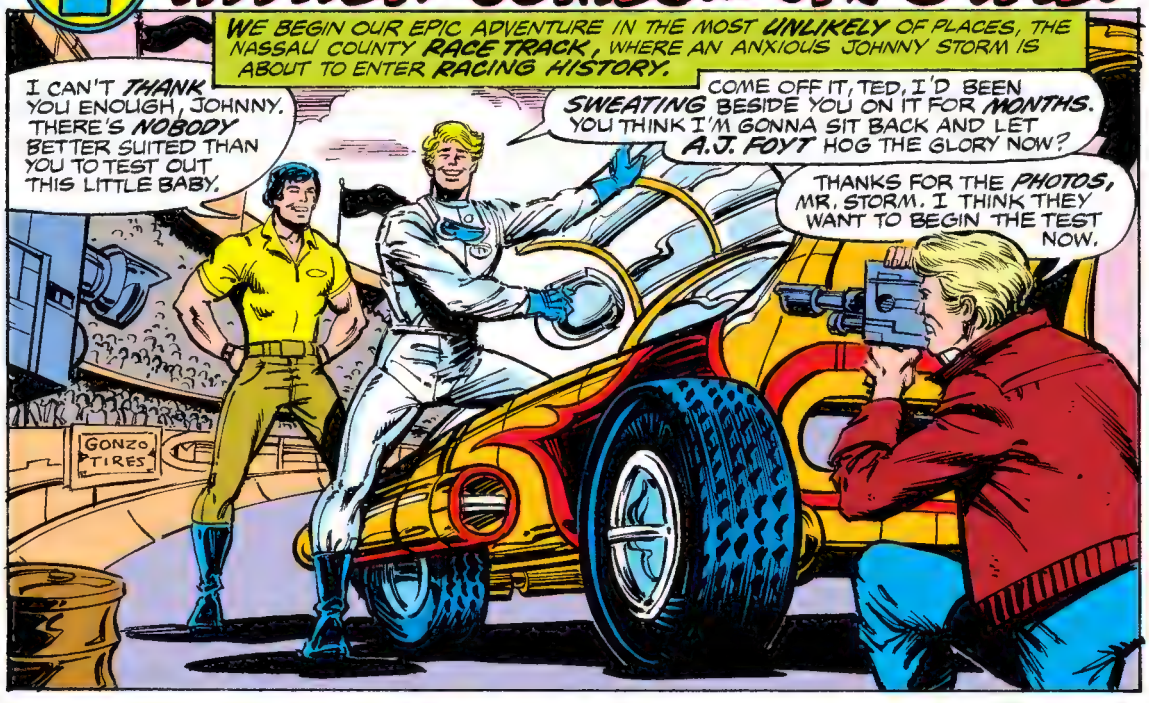
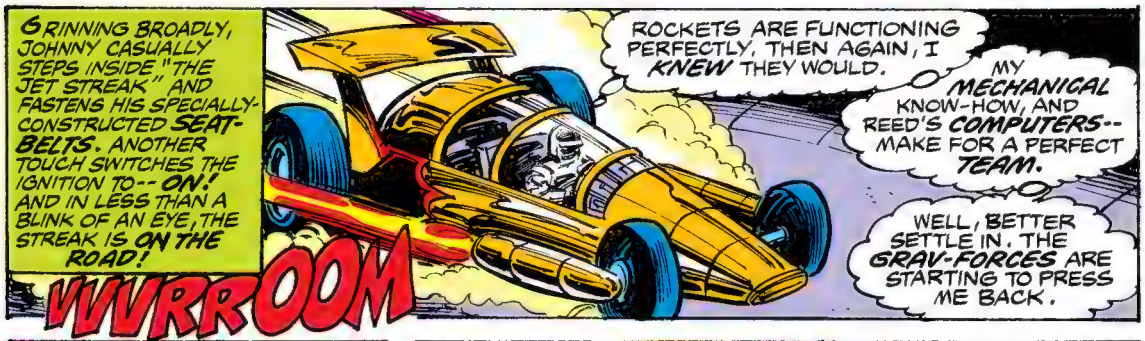
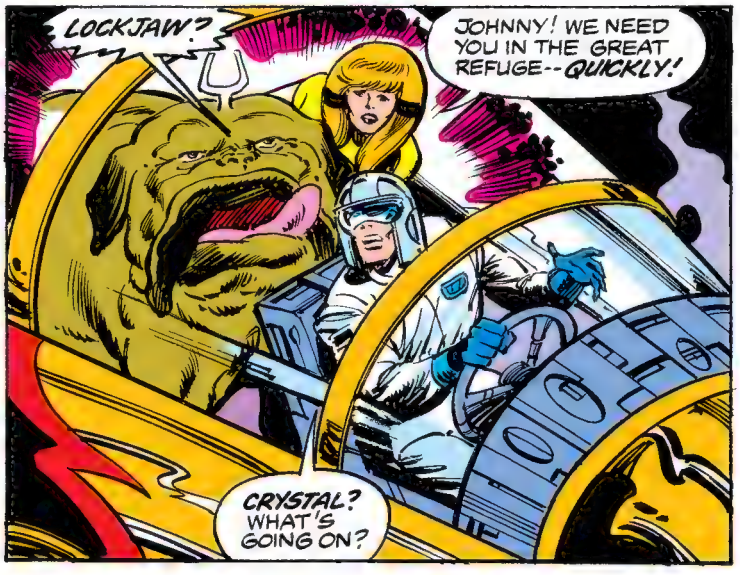
THE END OF THE INHUMANS™ ...AND THE FANTASTIC FOUR®
POSSIBLY THE MOST POWERFUL STORY YOU'LL READ IN THIS, THE MARVEL RENAISSANCE OF COMICS!
IN OTHER WORDS, IF YA MISS THIS MASTERPIECE, YOU'LL HATE YOURSELF IN THE MORNING!

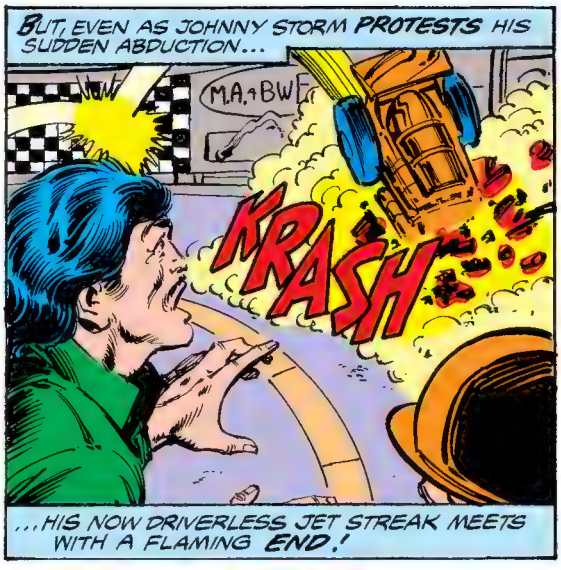
CHAPTER 1 HITHER COMES... CRYSTAL!

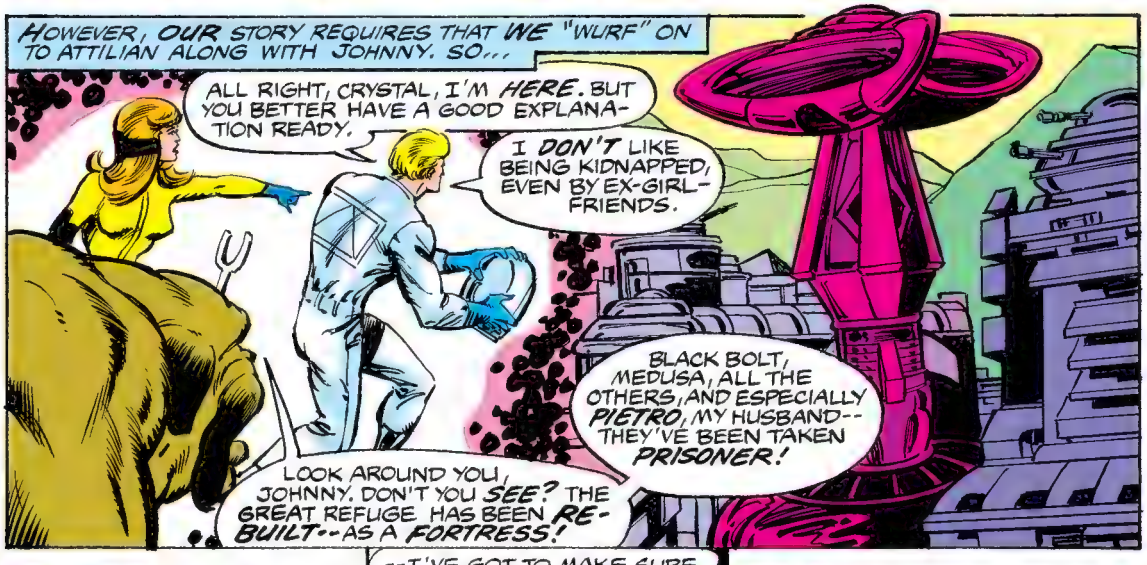

WE BEGIN OUR EPIC ADVENTURE IN THE MOST UNLIKELY OF PLACES, THE NASSAU COUNTY RACE TRACK, WHERE AN ANXIOUS JOHNNY STORM IS ABOUT TO ENTER RACING HISTORY.
I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH, JOHNNY. THERE'S NOBODY BETTER SUITED THAN YOU TO TEST OUT THIS LITTLE BABY.
COME OFF IT, TED, I'D BEEN SWEATING BESIDE YOU ON IT FOR MONTHS. YOU THINK I'M GONNA SIT BACK AND LET A.J. FOYT HOG THE GLORY NOW?
THANKS FOR THE PHOTOS, MR. STORM. I THINK THEY WANT TO BEGIN THE TEST NOW.
GONZO TIRES

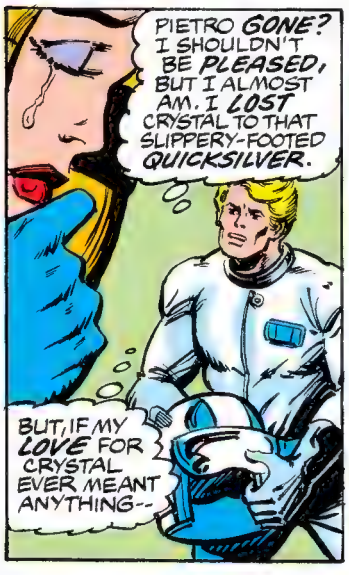

GRINNING BROADLY, JOHNNY CASUALLY STEPS INSIDE "THE JET STREAK," AND FASTENS HIS SPECIALLY-CONSTRUCTED SEAT-BELTS. ANOTHER TOUCH SWITCHES THE IGNITION TO-- ON! AND IN LESS THAN A BLINK OF AN EYE, THE STREAK IS ON THE ROAD!
VVVRROOM
ROCKETS ARE FUNCTIONING PERFECTLY. THEN AGAIN, I KNEW THEY WOULD.
MY MECHANICAL KNOW-HOW, AND REED'S COMPUTERS-- MAKE FOR A PERFECT TEAM.
WELL, BETTER SETTLE IN. THE GRAV-FORCES ARE STARTING TO PRESS ME BACK.

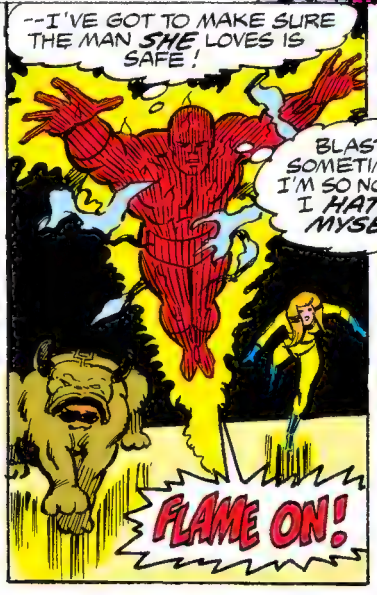


THERE'S NO TIME FOR EXPLANATIONS, JOHNNY. YOU'VE JUST GOT TO TRUST ME!
ATTILAN NEEDS YOU.
ALL RIGHT, LOCKJAW--TAKE US HOME!
WURF


BUT, EVEN AS JOHNNY STORM PROTESTS HIS SUDDEN ABDUCTION...
M.A.-1 BWF
KRASH
...HIS NOW DRIVERLESS JET STREAK MEETS WITH A FLAMING END!


HOWEVER, OUR STORY REQUIRES THAT WE "WURF" ON TO ATTILAN ALONG WITH JOHNNY. SO...
ALL RIGHT, CRYSTAL, I'M HERE. BUT YOU BETTER HAVE A GOOD EXPLANATION READY.
I DON'T LIKE BEING KIDNAPPED, EVEN BY EX-GIRLFRIENDS.
BLACK BOLT, MEDUSA, ALL THE OTHERS, AND ESPECIALLY PIETRO, MY HUSBAND--THEY'VE BEEN TAKEN PRISONER!
LOOK AROUND YOU, JOHNNY. DON'T YOU SEE? THE GREAT REFUGE HAS BEEN RE-BUILT--AS A FORTRESS!

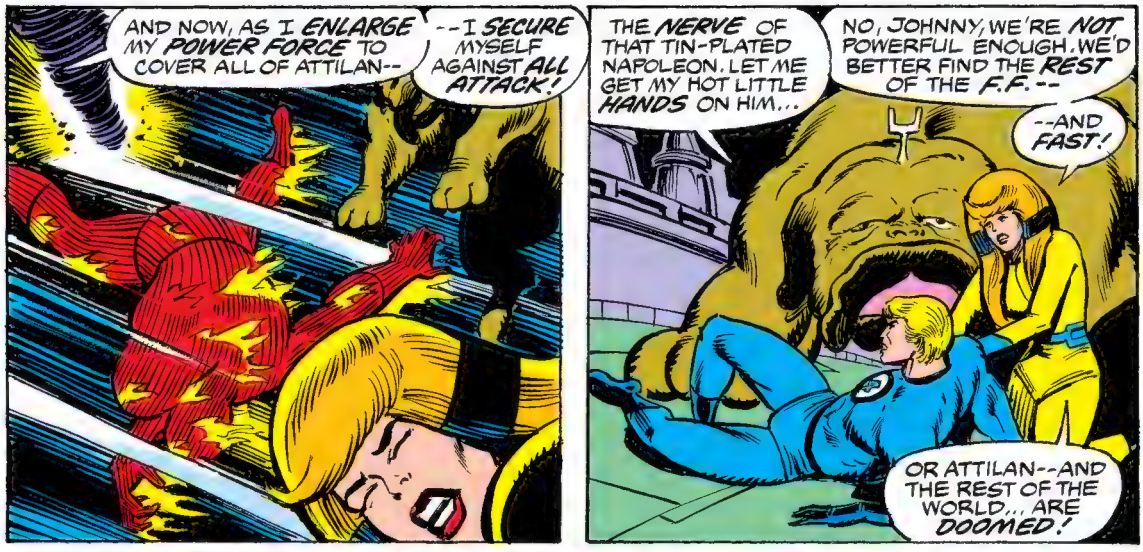

PIETRO GONE? I SHOULDN'T BE PLEASED, BUT I ALMOST AM. I LOST CRYSTAL TO THAT SLIPPERY-FOOTED QUICKSILVER.
BUT, IF MY LOVE FOR CRYSTAL EVER MEANT ANYTHING--


--I'VE GOT TO MAKE SURE THE MAN SHE LOVES IS SAFE!
BLAST! SOMETIMES I'M SO NOBLE I HATE MYSELF!
FLAME ON!

STAND BACK, CRYS--THE HUMAN TORCH IS READY!
READY... TO DIE!

ALL MY MONTHS OF PLANNING AND WORKING WITH--THE OTHER ONE--WILL NOT BE IN VAIN.
I'D ANTICIPATED THE INTERFERENCE OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR! I'M READY FOR THEM!
WHAM!
AND NOW, NOTHING CAN EVER STOP THRAXON THE SCHEMER!
HIS ION CANNON IS PRIMED, AND A SILVER LIGHT STABS OUT WITH UNCANNY ACCURACY.
AND THOUGH THE ALERTED JOHNNY STORM DELIBERATELY SWERVES TO DODGE THE POWERFUL RAY, HE QUICKLY LEARNS HE CANNOT OUTRACE THRAXON'S DEADLY BEAMS.
BLAZES!
PLAK!
JOHNNY TUMBLES HEADLONG TO THE GROUND, WHERE...
JOHNNY?!!
I'M ALL RIGHT, CRYS. ONLY MY PRIDE'S A PAIN IN THE YOU-KNOW-WHERE.
BUT IT WON'T BE SMARTING ONCE I PROVE TO THIS HAIRY BOZO WHAT BEING THE HUMAN TORCH IS ALL ABOUT!
FWISHHH
YOU FOOL!

YOU MAY HAVE DESTROYED THE ION CANNON, BUT YOU'LL FIND THRAXON WILL NOT FALL SO EASILY!
OBSERVE THE POWER FORCE! IT PROTECTS ME IN AN INVULNERABLE SHIELD!
BLAST, HE'S RIGHT! MY FLAME-MISSILES ARE BOUNCING RIGHT OFF IT!
AS JOHNNY PONDERS HIS PREDICAMENT, CRYSTAL ACTS WITH SURPRISING SPEED...
I THINK IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO STAND ASIDE, JOHNNY.
OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT I, TOO, AM AN INHUMAN!
AND MINE ARE THE POWERS OF--THE ELEMENTAL!
WHAA? SHE'S CALLING DOWN THE LIGHTNING?
BUT A MOMENT AGO --THE SKY WAS CLEAR!
ONLY IT DOESN'T SEEM TO MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE. HER BOLTS CAN'T PIERCE THRAXON'S SHIELD ANY MORE THAN MINE DID!
NOT EVEN MY ULTRA-CONCENTRATED NOVA-BLAST!
WHAK
HAVEN'T YOU FOOLS YET REALIZED I AM UNSTOPPABLE?
THAT MY PLANS CANNOT BE HALTED?
BULL! THE FF'S STOPPED CREEPS THAT MAKE YOU LOOK LIKE A GROUND-SLUG!
WE'LL GET YOU, PRETTY-BOY, AND WHEN WE DO--
WATCH IT, JOHNNY. THERE'S NOTHING CREATED ON EARTH THAT CAN WITHSTAND THE RAMPAGING POWER OF--THE TORNADO!
PERHAPS--?
PERHAPS NOTHING, GIRL, YOUR TORNADO WAS AS USELESS AS YOUR OTHER POWERS.
FACE IT, SISTER OF MEDUSA--THE GREAT REFUGE IS NOW MINE!

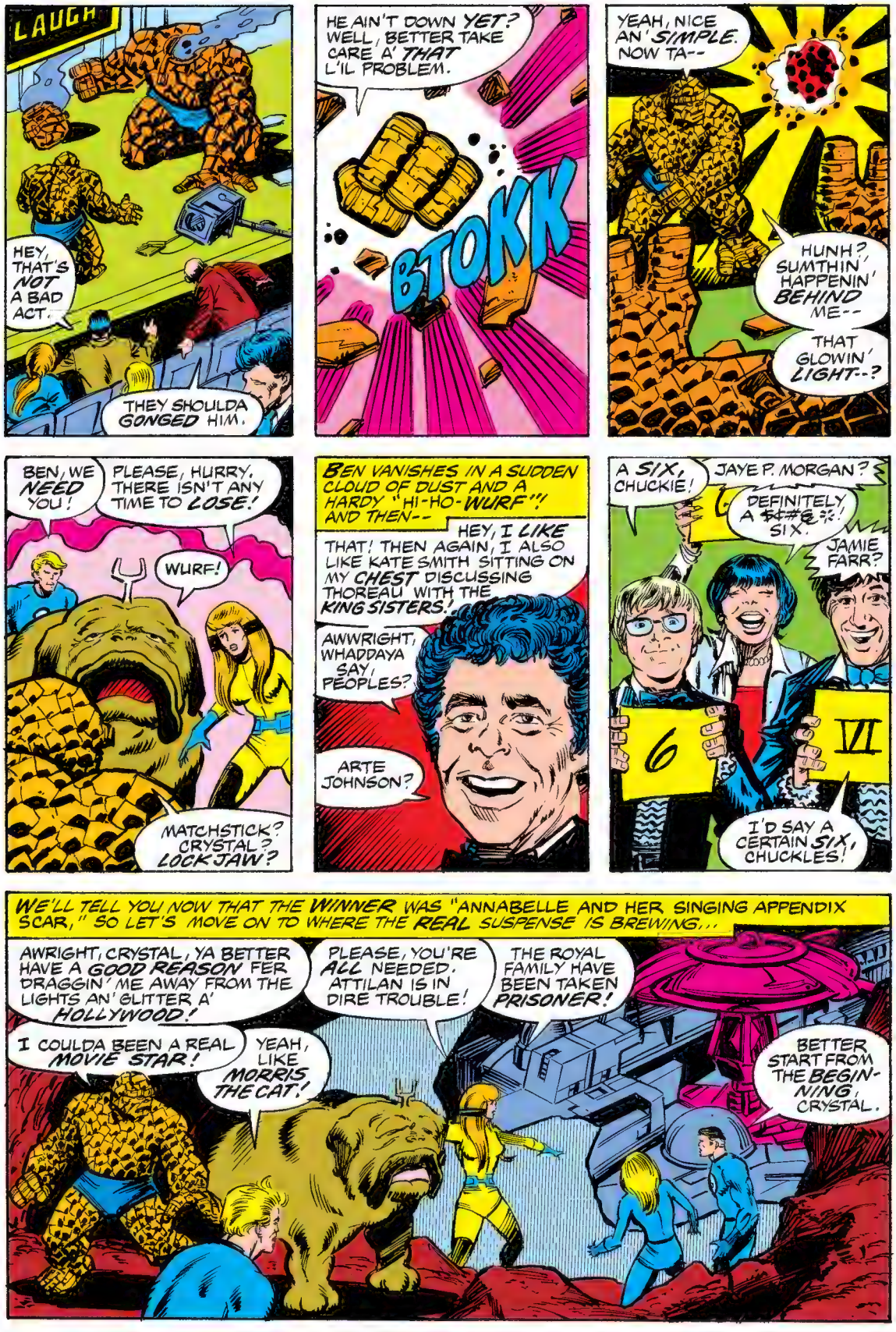

AND NOW, AS I ENLARGE MY POWER FORCE TO COVER ALL OF ATTILAN--
--I SECURE MYSELF AGAINST ALL ATTACK!
THE NERVE OF THAT TIN-PLATED NAPOLEON. LET ME GET MY HOT LITTLE HANDS ON HIM...
NO, JOHNNY, WE'RE NOT POWERFUL ENOUGH. WE'D BETTER FIND THE REST OF THE F.F.--
--AND FAST!
OR ATTILAN--AND THE REST OF THE WORLD... ARE DOOMED!

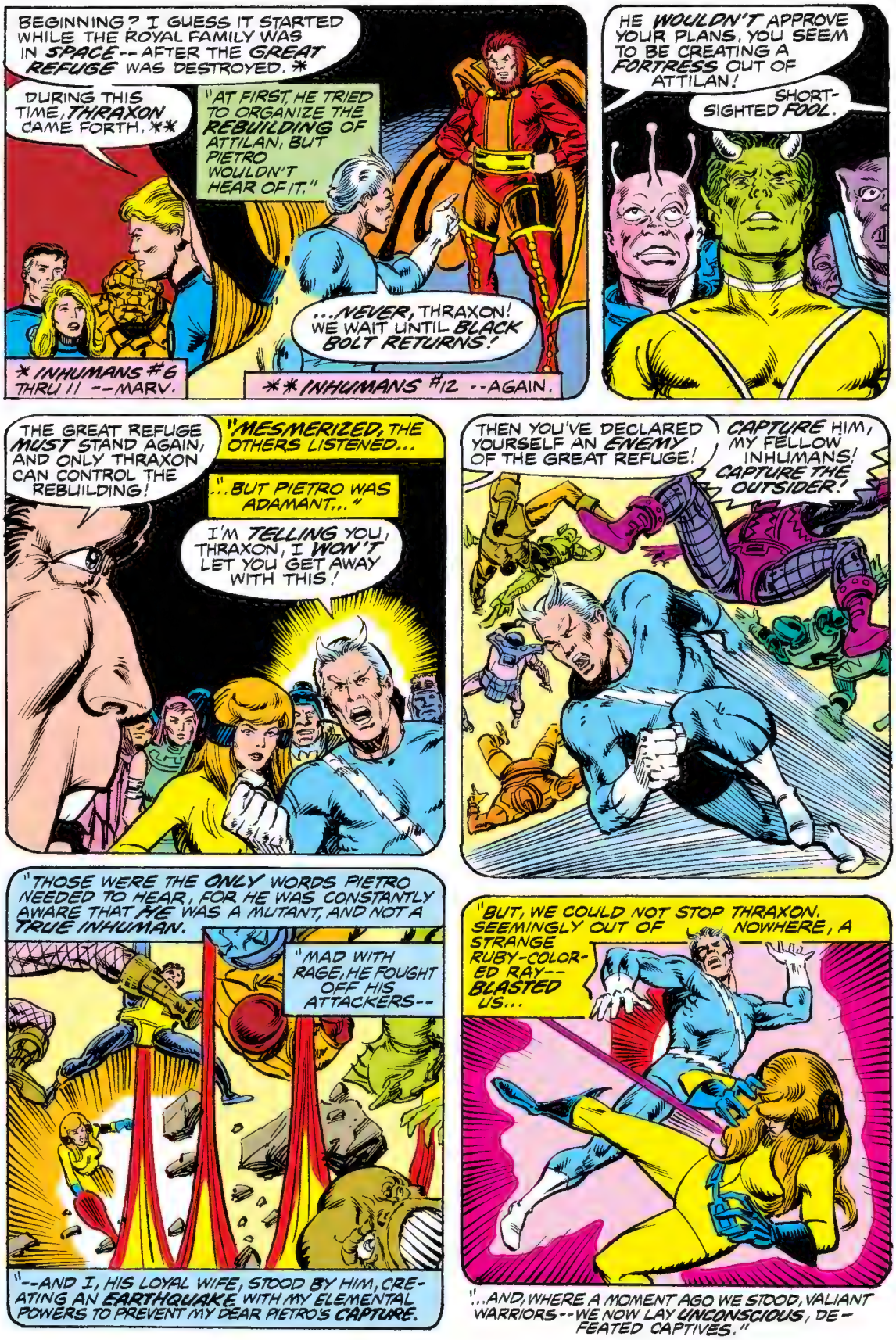
CHAPTER 2
HOLLYWOOD, HERE WE ARE!
AWRIGHT, LORENZO, YA GOTTA BE KIDDIN'? THAT OVERGROWN JUNKPILE COST YA TEN MILLION BUCKS?
WOTTA REVOLTIN' WASTE A' PERFECTLY GOOD MOOLAH. 'SPECIALLY WHEN YA COULDA GOT ME FER TWO OR MAYBE THREE MILL.
REED! I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT ACTRESS IS GOING TO PLAY ME!
WE LOOK NOTHING ALIKE. AND... HER COSTUME!
I COULDN'T WEAR ANYTHING LIKE THAT! COULD I?
LISTEN, MR. LORENZO, THESE CHANGES YOU'VE MADE IN THE SCRIPT JUST AREN'T ACCEPTABLE.
JUST BECAUSE SPECIAL EFFECTS ARE EXPENSIVE, YOU CAN'T WRITE OUT THE TORCH.
AHH, DE SCRIPT, IT'SA MAGNIFICENT! ISA PERFECT THE WAY IT IS!
THE PEOPLE, THEY'A GO SEE MY MOVIE, THEY EAT IT UP!

LISSEN, SHORT-CAKE, I AIN'T NO FIFTEEN FEET TALL. GET RIDDA THAT WALKIN' GARBAGE CAN. I'LL PLAY ME.
AHH, THIS THINK, HE'S A MAGNIFICENT. HE'S A COST ME TEN MILLION DOLLARS.
WHY DID I GET INVOLVED WITH THIS? IF WE DIDN'T NEED TAX MONEY...
BUT PEOPLE THEY WILL LOVE A MY THINK. WHEN THINK HURT, PEOPLE CRY!
I MAKE SURE THEY CRY, I PUT ONION SMELL ON THE SOUND TRACK!
MEANWHILE, IN THE CONTROL ROOM...
I JUST DON'T KNOW. I'M AFRAID OF THOSE HYDRAULIC LIFTS!
AFRAID? DON'T BE A FOOL, MR. KANTO.
I, THE GREAT LUIGI CANTALOPÉ, INVENTED THOSE LIFTS MYSELF!
OBSERVE, MR. KANTO, I PRESS THIS BUTTON.
OR IS IT THIS BUTTON?
SNIK!
AND...
HEY! THAT THING DROPPED ME! I'M SUING SOMEBODY! TELL ME WHO!
THUMP
OH NO, THE CONTROLS ARE STUCK.
STUCK? NEVER! LUIGI CANTALOPÉ DOES NOT INVENT MACHINES THAT STICK!
ERR... GIVE ME A HAND WITH THIS, MR. KANTO...
MEANWHILE, ON THE SOUNDSTAGE...
...THE GIANT THING REACTS CRAZILY. MECHANICAL ARMS FLAIL MADLY ABOUT.
THE ROBOT IS LOOSE, AND THERE IS SUDDEN HAVOC RUNNING AMUCK IN THE STUDIO.

SUE! SET UP YOUR FORCE FIELD, YOU'VE GOT TO SAVE THOSE MEN!
I'M GOING TO HELP BEN WITH HIS COUNTER-PART!
SHEESH! IT'S LIKE FIGHTIN' MYSELF, ONLY I AIN'T NEVER HAD SIZE TWO-THOUSAND CLODHOPPERS!
AWRIGHT, BENJY, THIS IS IT. IT'S CLOB--
ULLPPP!
LISSEN, CURLY, JUST CAUSE YER AS CUTE AS YER S TRULY, IT DON'T MEAN YA GOT THE RIGHT A PLAY RINGTOSS WITH ME!
HEY!
BLAMED THING SHRUGGED ME OFF LIKE I WAS A FLY!
ACROSS THE HALL FROM THE SOUNDSTAGE, A POPULAR TELEVISION SHOW IS BEING TAPED...
AHH YEAH, LET'S GIVE A REAL GONG SHOW WELCOME TO THIS FARMER FROM CHICAGO WHO SWEARS THAT LOVE MEANS NEVER HAVING TO WATCH ANOTHER TEE-WEE SHOW STARRING BOB DENVER!
LET'S HEAR IT FOR-- WALTER, THE DANCING PLASTIC SURGEON!
WATCHHH OUUUTTTTT BELOWWWWW
KRASH
J-J-JAYE P--?
DON'T ASK ME, JAMIE. A-ARTE--?
IF HE'S A PLASTIC SURGEON, HE'S GOTTA BE THE WORLD'S WORST!

CH-CH-CHUCK! THERE'S ANOTHER ONE OF HIM!
HEY, DON'T INSULT ME, LADY. THERE'S ONLY ONE BASHFUL, BLUE-EYED BENJAMIN J.-- AN' THAT'S ME!
BUT JUST TA MAKE SURE THINGS DON'T GET TOO OUTTA HAND--
--IT'S CLOB-BERIN' TIME!
THERE, I FINALLY SAID IT! BOY, DOES IT FEEL GOOD!
WHAMO
I DISTINCTLY DON'T REMEMBER THIS ACT DURING THE AUDITIONS!
HEY! I'M THE DANCING PLASTIC SUR-GEON--NOT HIM!
I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING SUSPICIOUS ABOUT ALL THIS!
LOOKS LIKE ROBBIE REDFORD HERE AIN'T GOIN' DOWN FER THE COUNT.
SHAME, 'CAUSE THAT MEANS I HAFTA DISMANTLE 'IM--
--EVEN IF HE IS THE CUDDLIEST ROBOT SINCE FARRAH FAWCETT-MAJORS!
GONG!
AN' THIS'S GOTTA BE THE PERFECT WEAPON FER ME TA DO IT!
FRIENDS, ROMANS, AND TEEVEE WATCHERS--
--LEND ME YER GONGS!
WHANG
HECK, WOT'S CAPTAIN AMERICA GOT THAT I AIN'T?

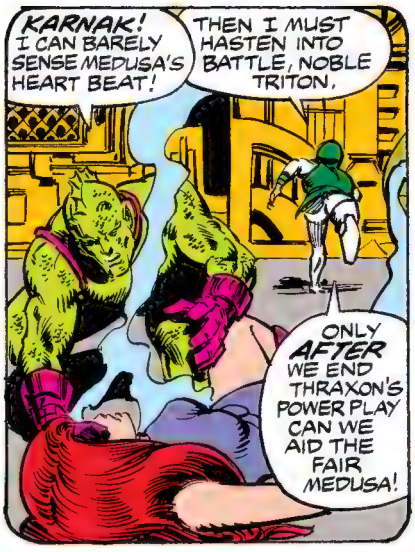

LAUGH
HEY, THAT'S NOT A BAD ACT.
THEY SHOULDA GONGED HIM.
HE AIN'T DOWN YET? WELL, BETTER TAKE CARE A' THAT L'IL PROBLEM.
BTOKK
YEAH, NICE AN' SIMPLE. NOW TA--
HUNH? SUMTHIN' HAPPENIN' BEHIND ME--
THAT GLOWIN' LIGHT--?
BEN, WE NEED YOU!
PLEASE, HURRY. THERE ISN'T ANY TIME TO LOSE!
WURF!
MATCHSTICK? CRYSTAL? LOCKJAW?
BEN VANISHES IN A SUDDEN CLOUD OF DUST AND A HARDY "HI-HO-WURF"! AND THEN--
HEY, I LIKE THAT! THEN AGAIN, I ALSO LIKE KATE SMITH SITTING ON MY CHEST DISCUSSING THOREAU WITH THE KING SISTERS!
AWWRIGHT, WHADDAYA SAY, PEOPLES?
ARTE JOHNSON?
A SIX, CHUCKIE!
JAYE P. MORGAN?
DEFINITELY A B#&%! SIX.
JAMIE FARR?
6
VI
I'D SAY A CERTAIN SIX, CHUCKLES!
WE'LL TELL YOU NOW THAT THE WINNER WAS "ANNABELLE AND HER SINGING APPENDIX SCAR," SO LET'S MOVE ON TO WHERE THE REAL SUSPENSE IS BREWING...
AWRIGHT, CRYSTAL, YA BETTER HAVE A GOOD REASON FER DRAGGIN' ME AWAY FROM THE LIGHTS AN' GLITTER A' HOLLYWOOD!
PLEASE, YOU'RE ALL NEEDED. ATTILAN IS IN DIRE TROUBLE!
THE ROYAL FAMILY HAVE BEEN TAKEN PRISONER!
I COULDA BEEN A REAL MOVIE STAR!
YEAH, LIKE MORRIS THE CAT!
BETTER START FROM THE BEGINNING, CRYSTAL.


BEGINNING? I GUESS IT STARTED WHILE THE ROYAL FAMILY WAS IN SPACE--AFTER THE GREAT REFUGE WAS DESTROYED. *
DURING THIS TIME, THRAXON CAME FORTH. **
"AT FIRST, HE TRIED TO ORGANIZE THE REBUILDING OF ATTILAN, BUT PIETRO WOULDN'T HEAR OF IT."
...NEVER, THRAXON! WE WAIT UNTIL BLACK BOLT RETURNS!
* INHUMANS #6 THRU 11 --MARV.
** INHUMANS #12 --AGAIN.
HE WOULDN'T APPROVE YOUR PLANS, YOU SEEM TO BE CREATING A FORTRESS OUT OF ATTILAN!
SHORT-SIGHTED FOOL.
THE GREAT REFUGE MUST STAND AGAIN, AND ONLY THRAXON CAN CONTROL THE REBUILDING!
"MESMERIZED, THE OTHERS LISTENED...
"...BUT PIETRO WAS ADAMANT..."
I'M TELLING YOU, THRAXON, I WON'T LET YOU GET AWAY WITH THIS!
THEN YOU'VE DECLARED YOURSELF AN ENEMY OF THE GREAT REFUGE!
CAPTURE HIM, MY FELLOW INHUMANS! CAPTURE THE OUTSIDER!
"THOSE WERE THE ONLY WORDS PIETRO NEEDED TO HEAR, FOR HE WAS CONSTANTLY AWARE THAT HE WAS A MUTANT, AND NOT A TRUE INHUMAN.
"MAD WITH RAGE, HE FOUGHT OFF HIS ATTACKERS--
"--AND I, HIS LOYAL WIFE, STOOD BY HIM, CREATING AN EARTHQUAKE WITH MY ELEMENTAL POWERS TO PREVENT MY DEAR PIETRO'S CAPTURE.
"BUT, WE COULD NOT STOP THRAXON. SEEMINGLY OUT OF NOWHERE, A STRANGE RUBY-COLORED RAY--BLASTED US...
"...AND, WHERE A MOMENT AGO WE STOOD, VALIANT WARRIORS--WE NOW LAY UNCONSCIOUS, DEFEATED CAPTIVES."

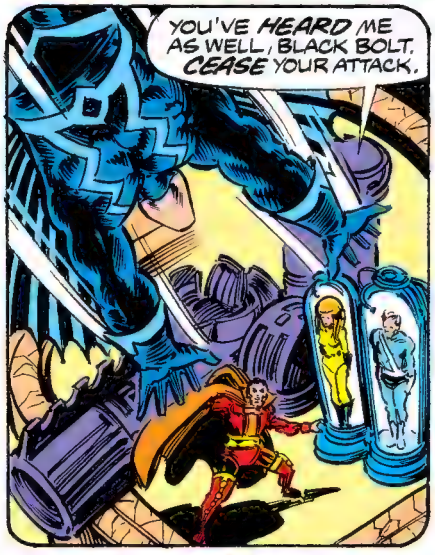
THE FIRST OF MY ENEMIES ARE DOWNED. NOW WE HAVE ONLY TO WAIT FOR THE IN-EVITABLE!
WHEN THE OTHERS RETURN, THEY, TOO, WILL FALL--
--AND THRAXON WILL BECOME MONARCH OVER ALL!
WE WERE CAPTURED, PIETRO AND I, AND DURING OUR IM-PRISONMENT THE OTHERS FINALLY RETURNED.
I TELL YOU, WHEN I SAW BLACK BOLT'S MAJESTIC FORM ARCING THROUGH THE SKIES OVER ATTILAN, I KNEW IN MY HEART-OF-HEARTS WE WOULD BE SAVED!
4
"BUT, AS THEY FLEW TOWARD THE PALACE ROYAL, THRAXON'S IONIC BEAMS SHATTERED THEIR HOVER CRAFT."
WHAMMO
STAND READY! MY LIVING HAIR WILL STOP YOU FROM FALLING--
--WHILE BLACK BOLT KEEPS ME FROM PLUNGING TO A CERTAIN DOOM.

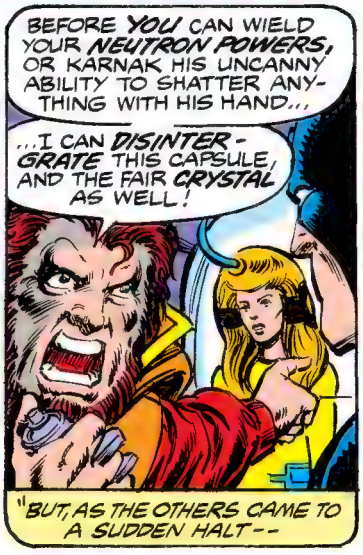
VERY GOOD, MADAME MEDUSA. BUT YOU'VE ONLY POSTPONED YOUR DEATHS.
THRAXON? WE ALWAYS KNEW YOU TO BE MILITANT, BUT WHAT MANNER OF MADNESS ARE YOU UP TO?
NOTHING CAN PREVENT THEM.
BLACK BOLT RULES US-- NOT YOU!
BAH! YOUR LOVER RULED US, MEDUSA-- PAST TENSE!
NOW I COMMAND THE POWER OF THE INHUMANS!
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? WE, WHO HAVE POWERS BEYOND THE DREAMS OF ALL HUMANS, ARE FORCED TO LIVE IN SOLITUDE!
IT IS WE WHO SHOULD FREELY ROAM THIS WORLD, AND THE HUMANS WHO SHOULD BE CORRALLED IN MEAGER, RIGIDLY CONTROLLED PRISONS!
IT IS SURVIVAL OF THE STRONGEST, MEDUSA, AND I SHALL LEAD OUR PEOPLE TO VICTORY!
BY AGON'S GENES! I'M NO FONDER OF THE HUMANS THAN YOU, MADMAN--
--BUT I OBEY OUR LEADER'S COMMANDS, AND, SO HELP ME-- YOU WILL, TOO!
THUMP
"WITH A MIGHTY STAMP OF HIS ALL-POWERFUL HOOVES, GORGON CAN SHATTER A MOUNTAIN. AND SO IT WAS THAT HE INSTANTLY CREATED A POWERFUL SHOCK WAVE!"
WHAT? YOU SEEK TO TOPPLE ME FROM MY PERCH? TRULY, GORGON, YOU HAVEN'T YET GLEANED HOW PERFECTLY PLANNED THIS HAS ALL BEEN!
I'VE REBUILT THE GREAT REFUGE INTO ONE MASSIVE WEAPON--
--ONE THAT WILL EXACT SWIFT AND TERRIBLE VENGEANCE ON ALL MY ENEMIES!
THEN TAKE US ALL ON, CRAZED ONE!
WAP
MADAME MEDUSA IS READY FOR BATTLE!
AS IS THRAXON, CURSED FEMALE!
YOU SEE, I WIELD THE POWER OF THE IONIC FORCE-- FROM WITHIN ME!

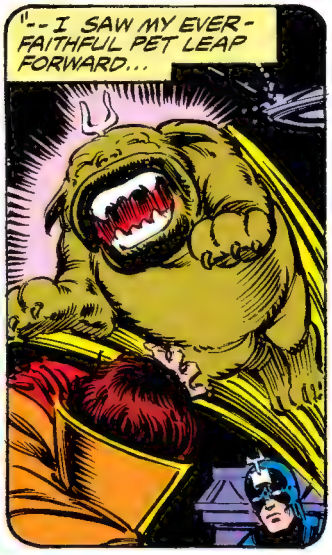
BA TAM M


KARNAK! I CAN BARELY SENSE MEDUSA'S HEART BEAT!
THEN I MUST HASTEN INTO BATTLE, NOBLE TRITON.
ONLY AFTER WE END THRAXON'S POWER PLAY CAN WE AID THE FAIR MEDUSA!

WITH ONE WELL-AIMED BLOW, I CAN DESTROY THIS WEAPON.
I AM NOT CALLED KARNAK THE SHATTERER-- FOR NOTHING!
HALT, KARNAK. OR YOUR FIRST MOVEMENT WILL MEAN THE DEATH OF MEDUSA'S LOVELY SISTER!

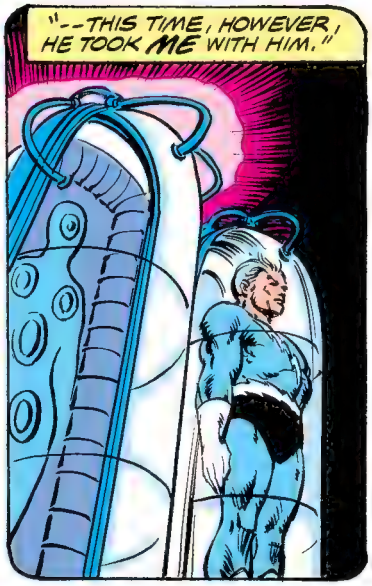

YOU'VE HEARD ME AS WELL, BLACK BOLT. CEASE YOUR ATTACK.


BEFORE YOU CAN WIELD YOUR NEUTRON POWERS, OR KARNAK HIS UNCANNY ABILITY TO SHATTER ANYTHING WITH HIS HAND...
...I CAN DISINTERGRATE THIS CAPSULE, AND THE FAIR CRYSTAL AS WELL!
"BUT, AS THE OTHERS CAME TO A SUDDEN HALT--

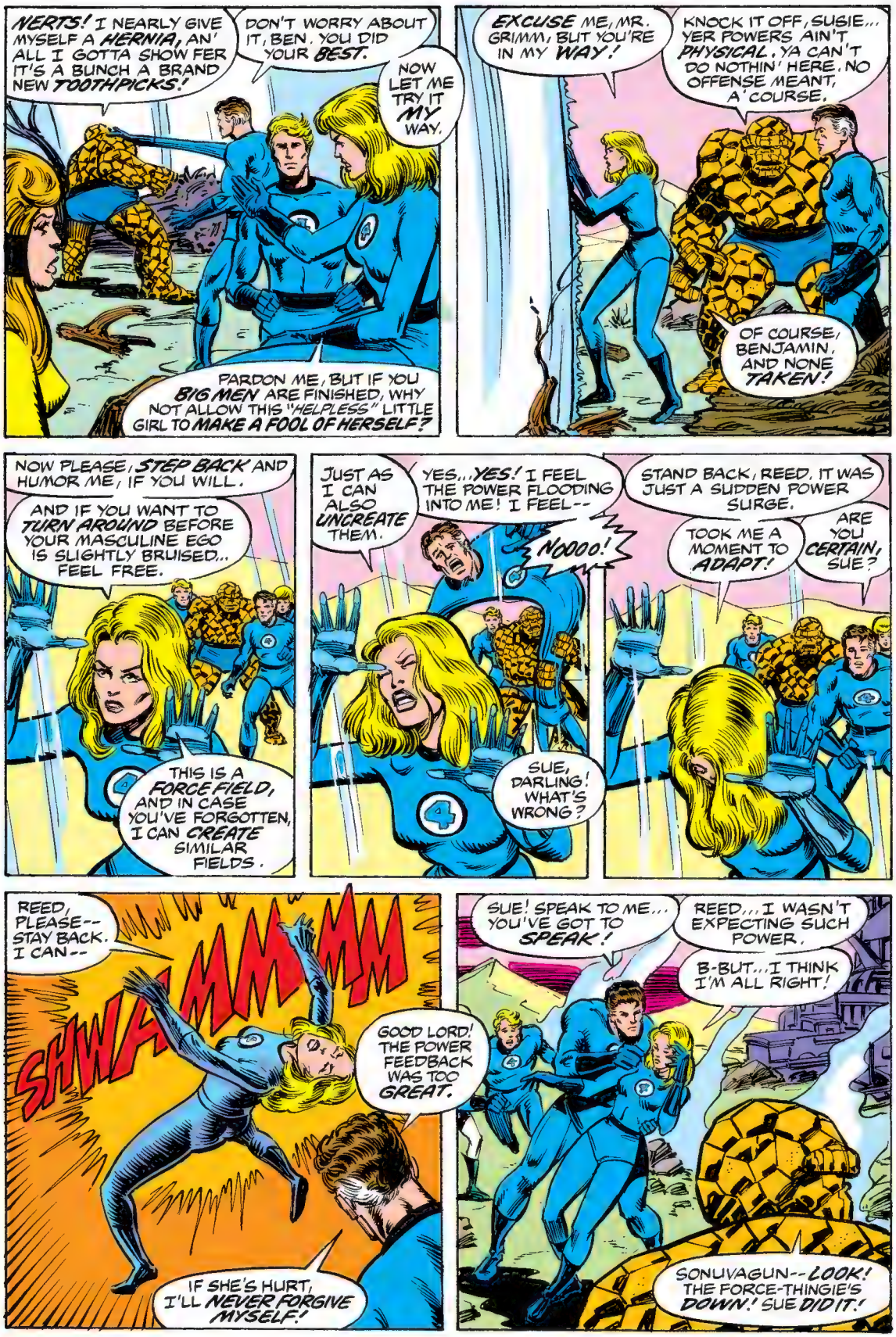

"-- I SAW MY EVER-FAITHFUL PET LEAP FORWARD...

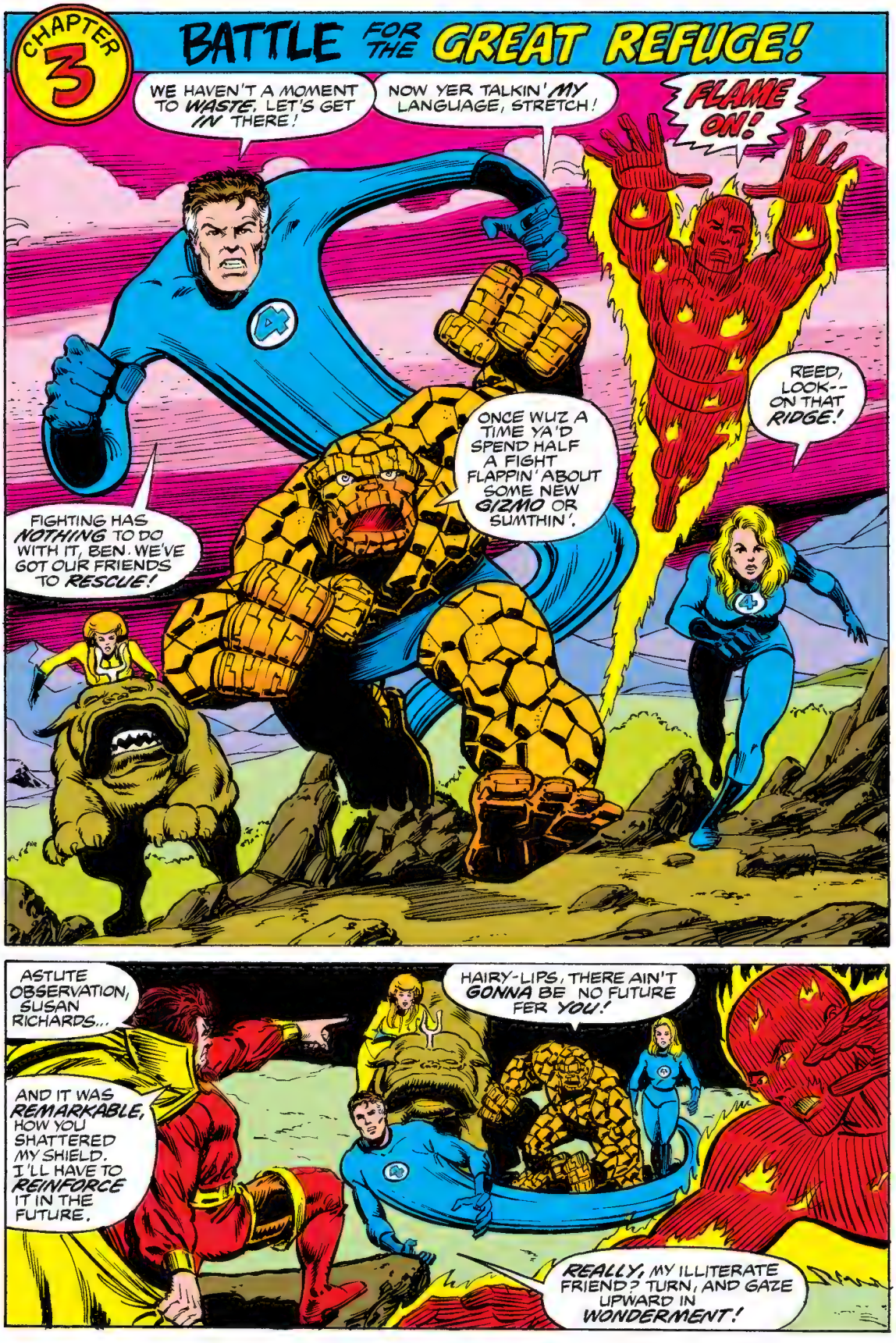
"...ONLY TO VANISH AN INSTANT LATER!
WURFF

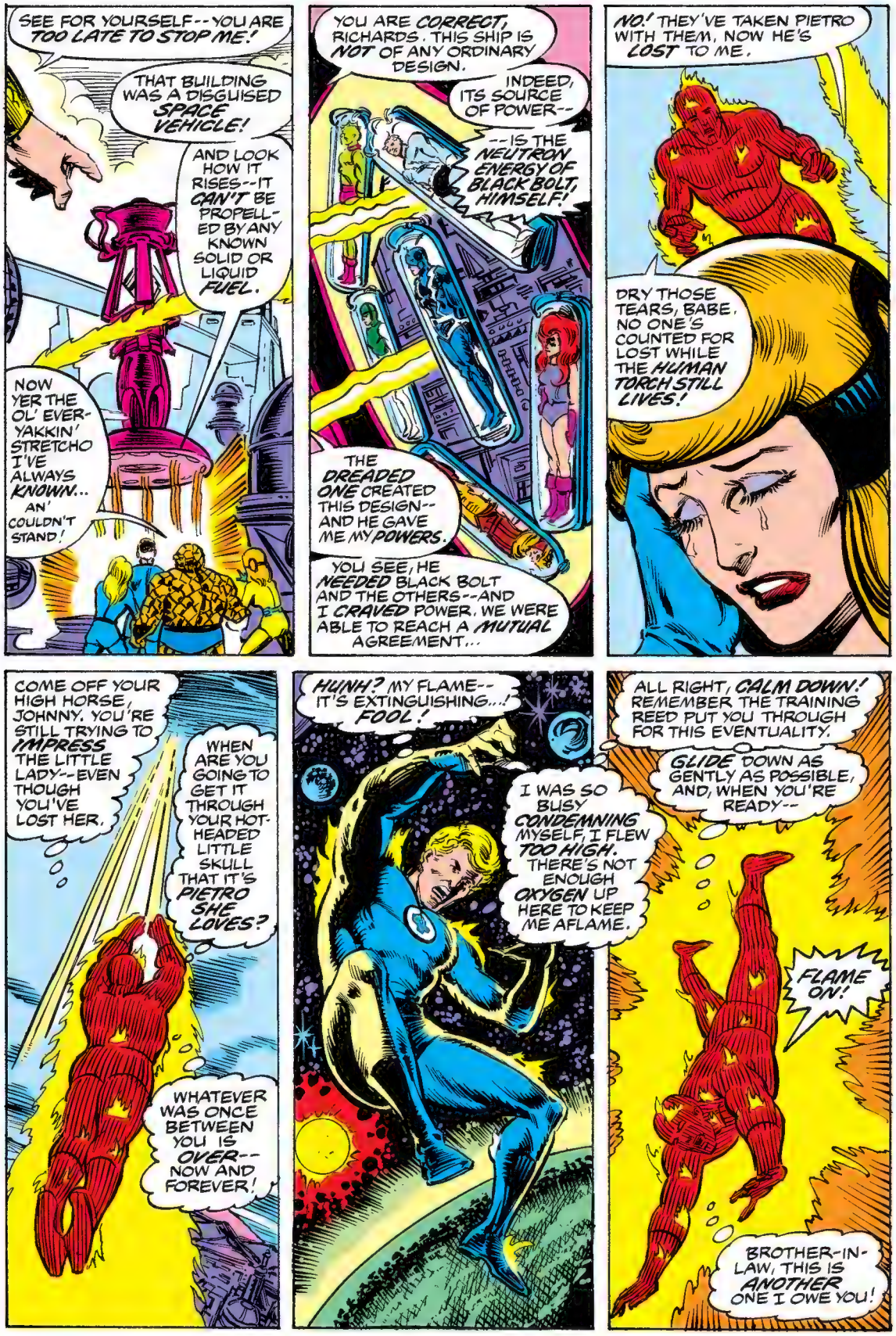
"A MOMENT MORE, AND MY LOYAL LOCKJAW RE-APPEARED BEFORE ME AND THEN FADED ONCE AGAIN--


"--THIS TIME, HOWEVER, HE TOOK ME WITH HIM."

WE TELEPORTED TO THE BAXTER BUILDING, BUT NO ONE WAS THERE. BUT YOUR MAILMAN TOLD ME WHERE JOHNNY WAS DEMONSTRATING SOME SORT OF ROCKET CAR.
I THEN HURRIED TO HIM, AND YOU KNOW THE REST.
BUT NOW I FEAR ALL IS LOST. THRAXON CREATED AN IN-PENETRABLE POWER SHIELD AROUND ALL ATTILAN.
JOHNNY AND I BOTH FAILED TO BREAK THROUGH. THERE'S NO WAY IN.
NO WAY--SHMO WAY! LEMME LAY MY LITTLE ORANGE MITTS ON THIS INVISIBLE DINGIE!
BEN, LET M--
BAA-KAMM!
YYYEEEOOWW
SHEESH! WHAT'S THAT BLASTED THING MADE OUTTA ANYWAY? EXTRA PARTS A' THE HULK?
I NEARLY BUSTED MY FOUR LITTLE PIGGIES!
I DON'T THINK BRUTE FORCE IS THE WAY THROUGH THAT FIELD, BEN.
PERHAPS THE MATTER-DIS-ASSEMBLER I'VE BEEN WORKING ON? IT'S IN MY LAB...
YEAH, RUSH ON HOME, STRETCH. MEANWHILE, I'M GONNA HUFF AN' PUFF TILL I BLOW THIS SPIT-BALL DOWN!
SKHNGH
WHAKKOO

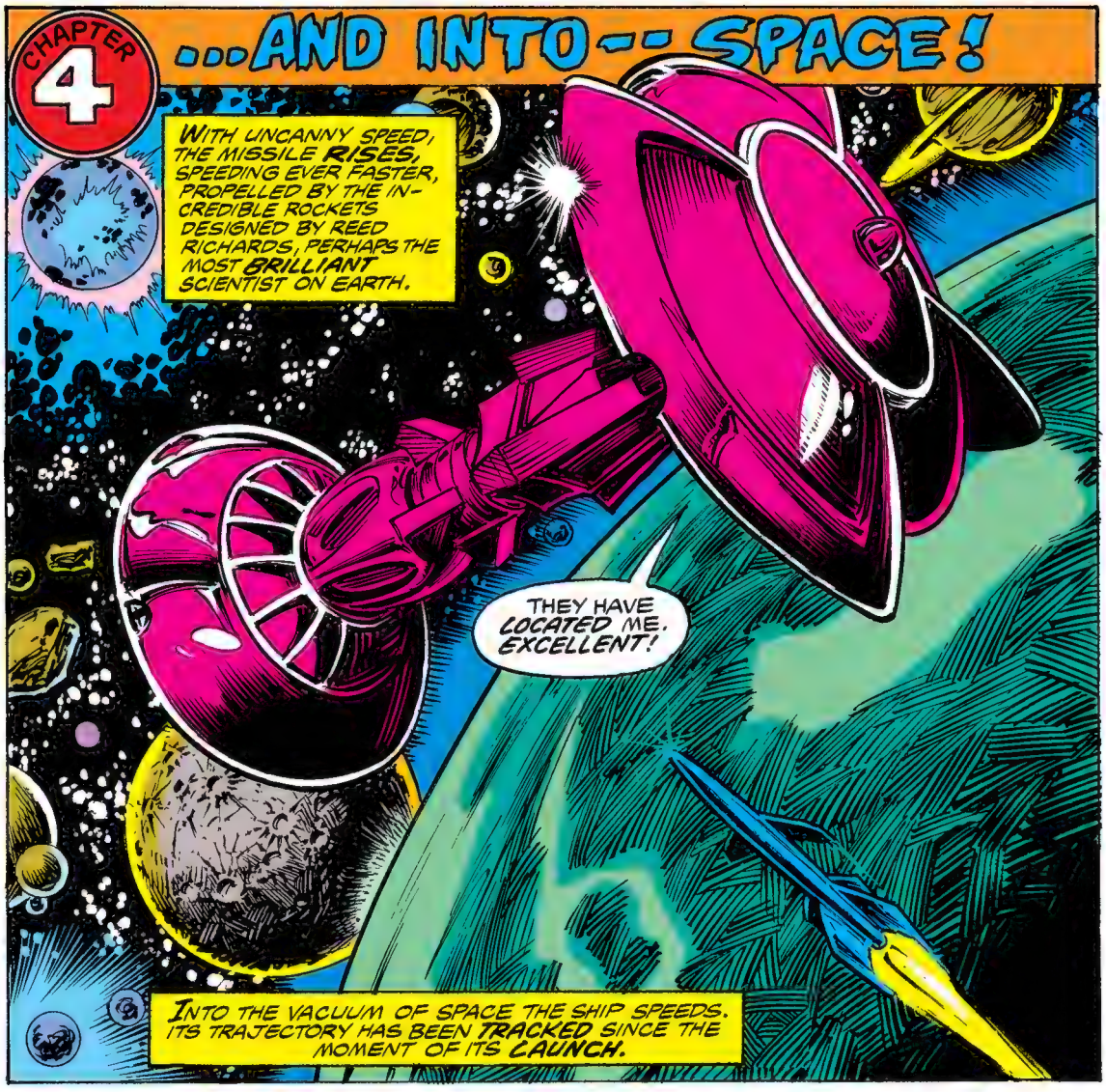

NERTS! I NEARLY GIVE MYSELF A HERNIA, AN' ALL I GOTTA SHOW FER IT'S A BUNCH A BRAND NEW TOOTHPICKS!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, BEN. YOU DID YOUR BEST.
NOW LET ME TRY IT MY WAY.
PARDON ME, BUT IF YOU BIG MEN ARE FINISHED, WHY NOT ALLOW THIS "HELPLESS" LITTLE GIRL TO MAKE A FOOL OF HERSELF?
EXCUSE ME, MR. GRIMM, BUT YOU'RE IN MY WAY!
KNOCK IT OFF, SUSIE... YER POWERS AIN'T PHYSICAL. YA CAN'T DO NOTHIN' HERE. NO OFFENSE MEANT, A' COURSE.
OF COURSE, BENJAMIN, AND NONE TAKEN!
NOW PLEASE, STEP BACK AND HUMOR ME, IF YOU WILL.
AND IF YOU WANT TO TURN AROUND BEFORE YOUR MASCULINE EGO IS SLIGHTLY BRUISED... FEEL FREE.
THIS IS A FORCE FIELD, AND IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN, I CAN CREATE SIMILAR FIELDS.
JUST AS I CAN ALSO UNCREATE THEM.
YES... YES! I FEEL THE POWER FLOODING INTO ME! I FEEL--
NOOOO!
SUE, DARLING! WHAT'S WRONG?
STAND BACK, REED, IT WAS JUST A SUDDEN POWER SURGE.
TOOK ME A MOMENT TO ADAPT!
ARE YOU CERTAIN, SUE?
REED, PLEASE-- STAY BACK. I CAN--
SHWAMMM
GOOD LORD! THE POWER FEEDBACK WAS TOO GREAT.
IF SHE'S HURT, I'LL NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF!
SUE! SPEAK TO ME... YOU'VE GOT TO SPEAK!
REED... I WASN'T EXPECTING SUCH POWER.
B-BUT... I THINK I'M ALL RIGHT!
SONUVAGUN-- LOOK! THE FORCE-THINGIE'S DOWN! SUE DID IT!

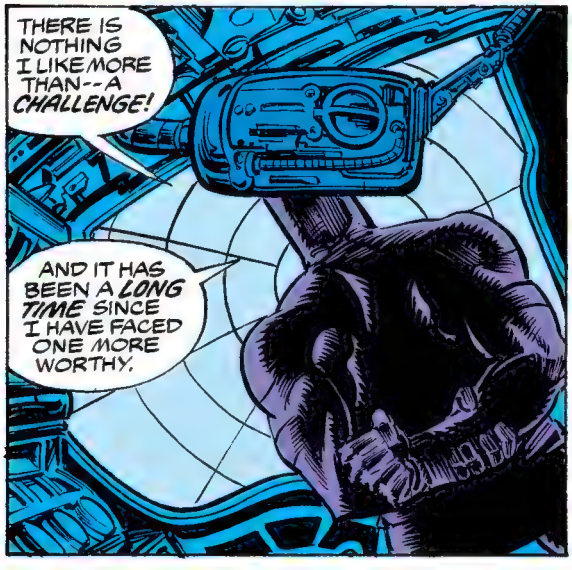

CHAPTER 3
BATTLE FOR THE GREAT REFUGE!
WE HAVEN'T A MOMENT TO WASTE. LET'S GET IN THERE!
NOW YER TALKIN' MY LANGUAGE, STRETCH!
FLAME ON!
REED, LOOK-- ON THAT RIDGE!
ONCE WUZ A TIME YA'D SPEND HALF A FIGHT FLAPPIN' ABOUT SOME NEW GIZMO OR SUMTHIN'.
FIGHTING HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT, BEN. WE'VE GOT OUR FRIENDS TO RESCUE!
ASTUTE OBSERVATION, SUSAN RICHARDS...
AND IT WAS REMARKABLE, HOW YOU SHATTERED MY SHIELD. I'LL HAVE TO REINFORCE IT IN THE FUTURE.
HAIRY-LIPS, THERE AIN'T GONNA BE NO FUTURE FER YOU!
REALLY, MY ILLITERATE FRIEND? TURN, AND GAZE UPWARD IN WONDERMENT!

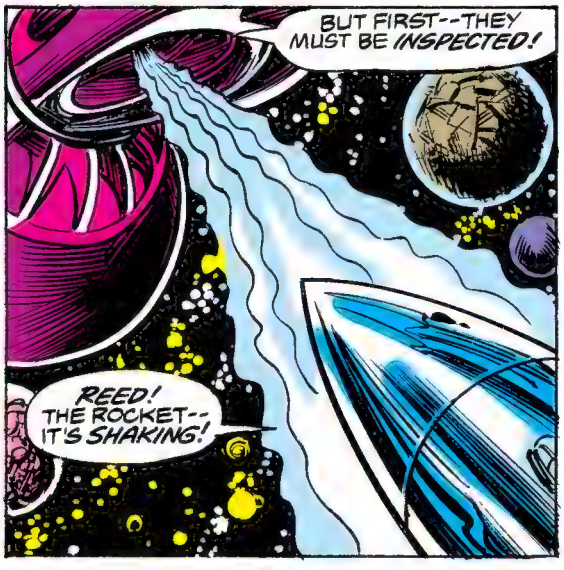

SEE FOR YOURSELF--YOU ARE TOO LATE TO STOP ME!
THAT BUILDING WAS A DISGUISED SPACE VEHICLE!
AND LOOK HOW IT RISES--IT CAN'T BE PROPELLED BY ANY KNOWN SOLID OR LIQUID FUEL.
NOW YER THE OL' EVER-YAKKIN' STRETCHO I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN... AN' COULDN'T STAND!
YOU ARE CORRECT, RICHARDS. THIS SHIP IS NOT OF ANY ORDINARY DESIGN.
INDEED, ITS SOURCE OF POWER--
--IS THE NEUTRON ENERGY OF BLACK BOLT, HIMSELF!
THE DREADED ONE CREATED THIS DESIGN--AND HE GAVE ME MY POWERS.
YOU SEE, HE NEEDED BLACK BOLT AND THE OTHERS--AND I CRAVED POWER. WE WERE ABLE TO REACH A MUTUAL AGREEMENT...
NO! THEY'VE TAKEN PIETRO WITH THEM, NOW HE'S LOST TO ME.
DRY THOSE TEARS, BABE. NO ONE'S COUNTED FOR LOST WHILE THE HUMAN TORCH STILL LIVES!
COME OFF YOUR HIGH HORSE, JOHNNY. YOU'RE STILL TRYING TO IMPRESS THE LITTLE LADY--EVEN THOUGH YOU'VE LOST HER.
WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GET IT THROUGH YOUR HOT-HEADED LITTLE SKULL THAT IT'S PIETRO SHE LOVES?
WHATEVER WAS ONCE BETWEEN YOU IS OVER--NOW AND FOREVER!
HUNH? MY FLAME--IT'S EXTINGUISHING...! FOOL!
I WAS SO BUSY CONDEMNING MYSELF, I FLEW TOO HIGH. THERE'S NOT ENOUGH OXYGEN UP HERE TO KEEP ME AFLAME.
ALL RIGHT, CALM DOWN! REMEMBER THE TRAINING REED PUT YOU THROUGH FOR THIS EVENTUALITY.
GLIDE DOWN AS GENTLY AS POSSIBLE, AND, WHEN YOU'RE READY--
FLAME ON!
BROTHER-IN-LAW, THIS IS ANOTHER ONE I OWE YOU!

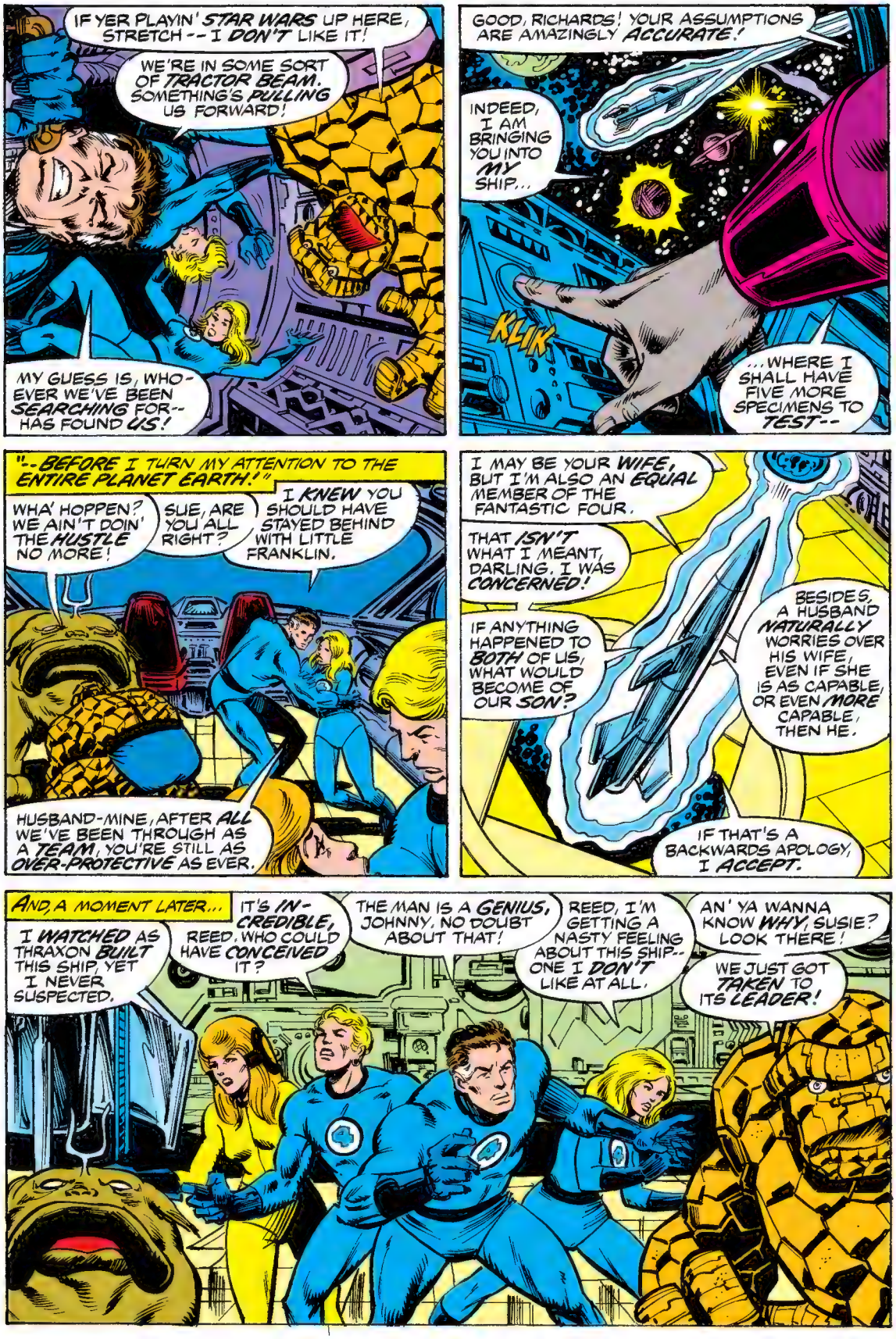
SOON...
YOU'VE FAILED, JUST AS I KNEW YOU WOULD. JUST AS THE DREADED ONE SAID.
AND ONCE I'VE ELIMINATED YOU, I CAN PROCLAIM MYSELF MONARCH OF THE GREAT REFUGE!
WHAT? MY POWERS--? I-I CAN'T FIRE THEM!
AGON HELP ME! WHAT'S WRONG? ALL THE POWERS THE DREADED ONE GAVE ME--THEY'RE GONE!
REED, LET ME GET HIM. NOW'S MY CHANCE!
NO, JOHNNY, YOU'VE HAD YOUR TURN IN THE SPOTLIGHT--
NOW IT'S TIME TO SHOW HIM WHAT MISTER FANTASTIC CAN DO!
WOKK
HE'S POWERLESS! THAT MEANS THE DREADED ONE--WHOEVER THAT IS--DESERTED THRAXON NOW THAT HE HOLDS THE OTHER INHUMANS.
WHO D'YA SUPPOSE THAT CREEPO IS, REED? DOC DOOM? MAXIMUS? YA DON'T SUPPOSE IT'S THE BLAMED IMPOSSIBLE MAN, D'YA?
WHOEVER IT IS, HIS POWERS ARE CONSIDERABLE. HE DEFEATED BLACK BOLT, AND THERE ARE VERY FEW MEN ALIVE WHO CAN DO THAT.
WHUMP
NOO! THE DREADED ONE GAVE ME POWERS. I MUST RULE WITH THEM! I MUST RULE!
THE GUY'S GONE BONKERS...
HE NEVER ASKED HIMSELF WHY ANYONE WITH POWERS SUCH AS THIS DREADED ONE OBVIOUSLY HAS, WOULD ASSOCIATE WITH HIM.
THRAXON WAS OBVIOUSLY A DUPE. AND HAVING BEEN USED--HE WAS ABANDONED!
WE'RE NOT ONLY FACING A MENACE WITH INCREDIBLE POWER--BUT SOMEONE WHO IS TOTALLY RUTHLESS AS WELL.

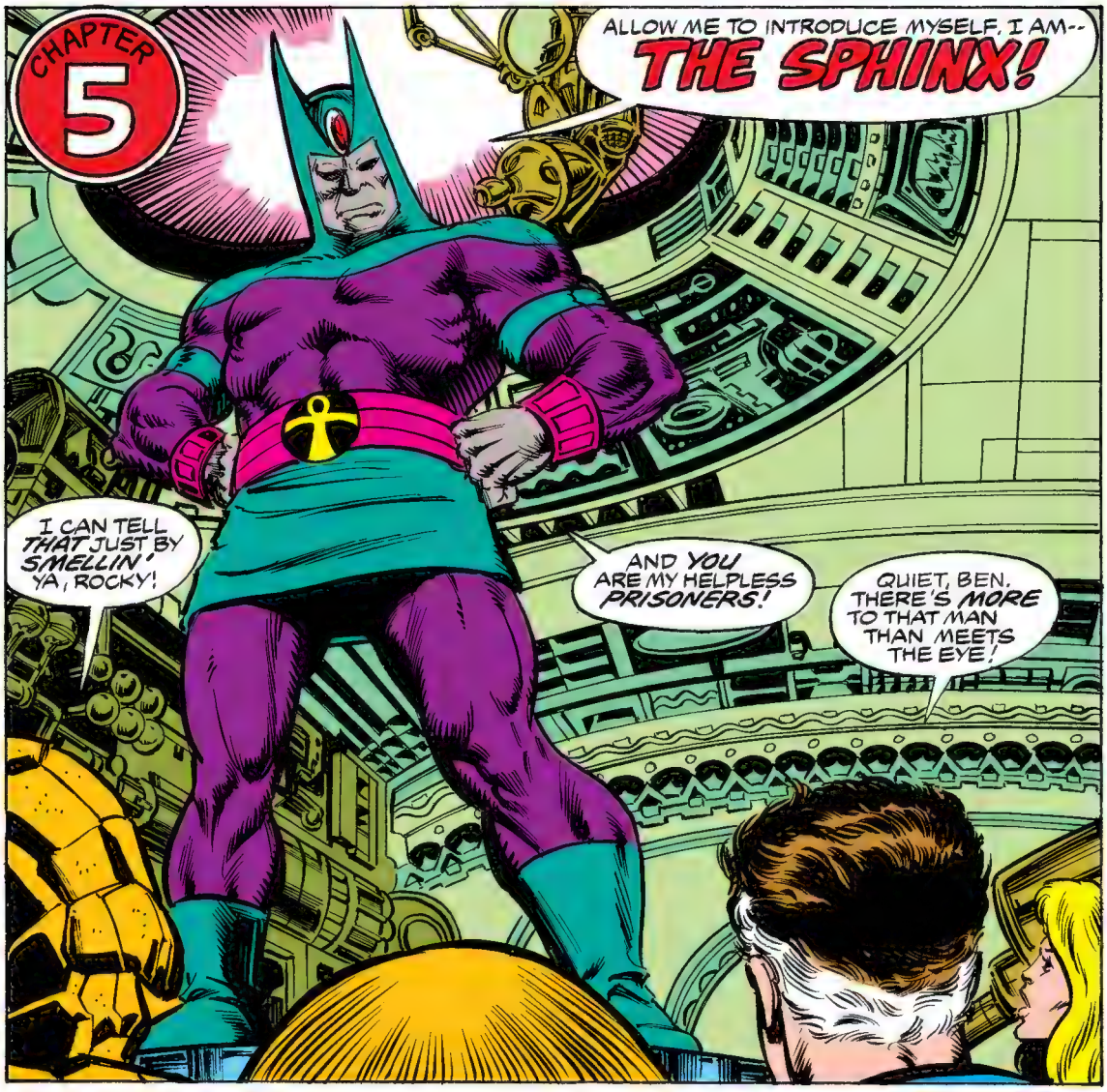
AWRIGHT, WHADDAYA WANT ME TA DO WITH THIS BOZO? WE SURE DON'T NEED 'IM.
TURN HIM OVER TO THE OTHER INHUMANS. BY NOW THEY MUST BE FREE OF HIS HYPNOTIC TRANCE, HE'LL BE SAFE UNTIL BLACK BOLT CAN JUDGE HIM.
TELL US, THRAXON--WHO IS THE DREADED ONE? WHERE HAS HE TAKEN THE ROYAL FAMILY?
TH-THE DREADED ONE GAVE ME MY POWERS SO I CAN RULE. HE HASN'T DESERTED ME. I KNOW IT. HE HASN'T DESERTED ME!
IT'S NO USE! HE CAN'T TELL US ANY-THING, POOR SOUL.
THEN IT'S ALL OVER. WE'VE LOST THEM ALL. I'LL NEVER SEE PIETRO AGAIN.
DON'T BELIEVE THAT FOR A MOMENT, CRYS. DIDN'T YOU HEAR REED?
WE'RE GOING AFTER YOUR FAMILY.
JOHNNY'S RIGHT, CRYSTAL.
THOSE PEOPLE ARE OUR FRIENDS. WE'RE NOT GOING TO FORSAKE THEM NOW.
I PROMISE YOU THIS, CRYSTAL--WE'LL KEEP SEARCHING FOR YOUR HUSBAND UNTIL WE FIND HIM. THE FANTASTIC FOUR SWEARS THAT!
HOW CAN I EVER THANK YOU?
THERE IS A WAY. CALL OVER LOCK-JAW, AND--
...A FEW MOMENTS LATER THE SEXTET FIND THEMSELVES BACK IN MANHATTAN, AND--
I'M AHEAD OF YOU, REED. I'LL SCOOT ON AHEAD AND PREPARE THE ROCKET!
RUNNING THE LENGTH OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S FIVE-STORY HEADQUARTERS IS THEIR ROCKET SILO--
--AND, SECONDS LATER, NEW YORK'S MIDTOWN AREA IS GIVEN A SUDDEN FREE SHOW OF NUCLE-AR POWER AT ITS GREATEST.

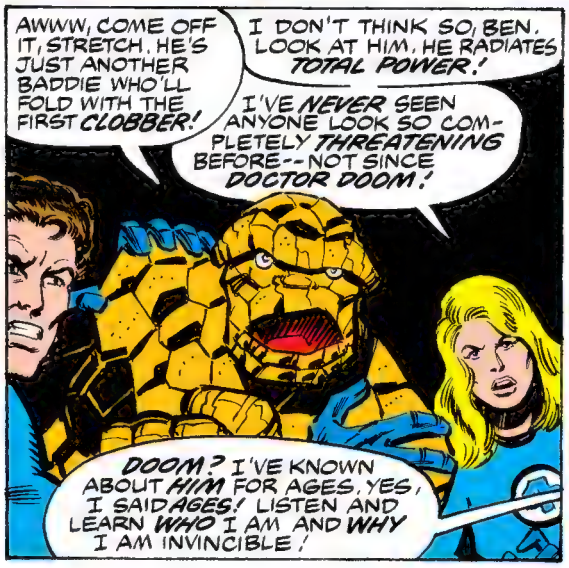

CHAPTER 4
...AND INTO--SPACE!
WITH UNCANNY SPEED, THE MISSILE RISES, SPEEDING EVER FASTER, PROPELLED BY THE INCREDIBLE ROCKETS DESIGNED BY REED RICHARDS, PERHAPS THE MOST BRILLIANT SCIENTIST ON EARTH.
THEY HAVE LOCATED ME. EXCELLENT!
INTO THE VACUUM OF SPACE THE SHIP SPEEDS. ITS TRAJECTORY HAS BEEN TRACKED SINCE THE MOMENT OF ITS LAUNCH.

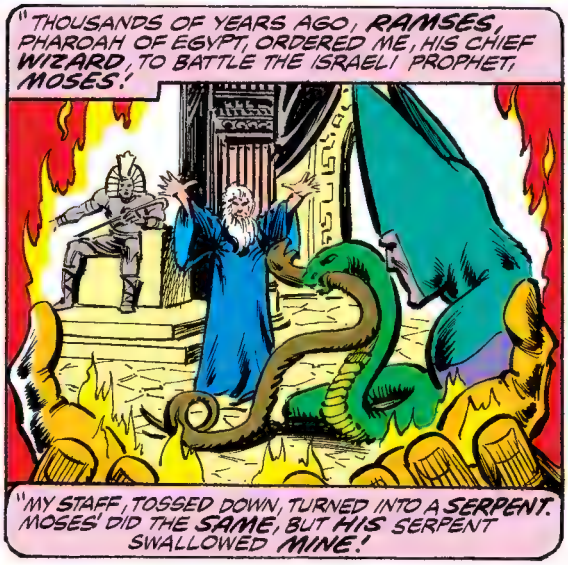

THERE IS NOTHING I LIKE MORE THAN--A CHALLENGE!
AND IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I HAVE FACED ONE MORE WORTHY.


BUT FIRST--THEY MUST BE INSPECTED!
REED! THE ROCKET--IT'S SHAKING!


IF YER PLAYIN' STAR WARS UP HERE, STRETCH -- I DON'T LIKE IT!
WE'RE IN SOME SORT OF TRACTOR BEAM. SOMETHING'S PULLING US FORWARD!
MY GUESS IS, WHO-EVER WE'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR-- HAS FOUND US!
GOOD, RICHARDS! YOUR ASSUMPTIONS ARE AMAZINGLY ACCURATE!
INDEED, I AM BRINGING YOU INTO MY SHIP...
KLIK
...WHERE I SHALL HAVE FIVE MORE SPECIMENS TO TEST--
"--BEFORE I TURN MY ATTENTION TO THE ENTIRE PLANET EARTH!"
WHA' HOPPEN? WE AIN'T DOIN' THE HUSTLE NO MORE!
SUE, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I KNEW YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED BEHIND WITH LITTLE FRANKLIN.
HUSBAND-MINE, AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH AS A TEAM, YOU'RE STILL AS OVER-PROTECTIVE AS EVER.
I MAY BE YOUR WIFE, BUT I'M ALSO AN EQUAL MEMBER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
THAT ISN'T WHAT I MEANT, DARLING, I WAS CONCERNED!
IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO BOTH OF US, WHAT WOULD BECOME OF OUR SON?
BESIDES, A HUSBAND NATURALLY WORRIES OVER HIS WIFE, EVEN IF SHE IS AS CAPABLE, OR EVEN MORE CAPABLE, THEN HE.
IF THAT'S A BACKWARDS APOLOGY, I ACCEPT.
AND, A MOMENT LATER...
I WATCHED AS THRAXON BUILT THIS SHIP, YET I NEVER SUSPECTED.
IT'S IN-CREDIBLE, REED. WHO COULD HAVE CONCEIVED IT?
THE MAN IS A GENIUS, JOHNNY, NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT!
REED, I'M GETTING A NASTY FEELING ABOUT THIS SHIP-- ONE I DON'T LIKE AT ALL.
AN' YA WANNA KNOW WHY, SUSIE? LOOK THERE!
WE JUST GOT TAKEN TO ITS LEADER!


CHAPTER 5
ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. I AM--
THE SPHINX!
I CAN TELL THAT JUST BY SMELLIN'! YA, ROCKY!
AND YOU ARE MY HELPLESS PRISONERS!
QUIET, BEN. THERE'S MORE TO THAT MAN THAN MEETS THE EYE!

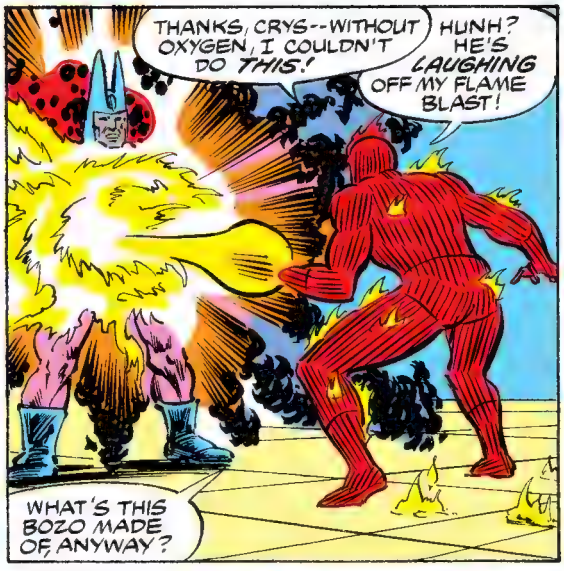

AWWW, COME OFF IT, STRETCH. HE'S JUST ANOTHER BADDIE WHO'LL FOLD WITH THE FIRST CLOBBER!
I DON'T THINK SO, BEN. LOOK AT HIM. HE RADIATES TOTAL POWER!
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYONE LOOK SO COMPLETELY THREATENING BEFORE--NOT SINCE DOCTOR DOOM!
DOOM? I'VE KNOWN ABOUT HIM FOR AGES, YES, I SAID AGES! LISTEN AND LEARN WHO I AM AND WHY I AM INVINCIBLE!


"THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, RAMSES, PHAROAH OF EGYPT, ORDERED ME, HIS CHIEF WIZARD, TO BATTLE THE ISRAELI PROPHET, MOSES!
"MY STAFF, TOSSED DOWN, TURNED INTO A SERPENT. MOSES' DID THE SAME, BUT HIS SERPENT SWALLOWED MINE!

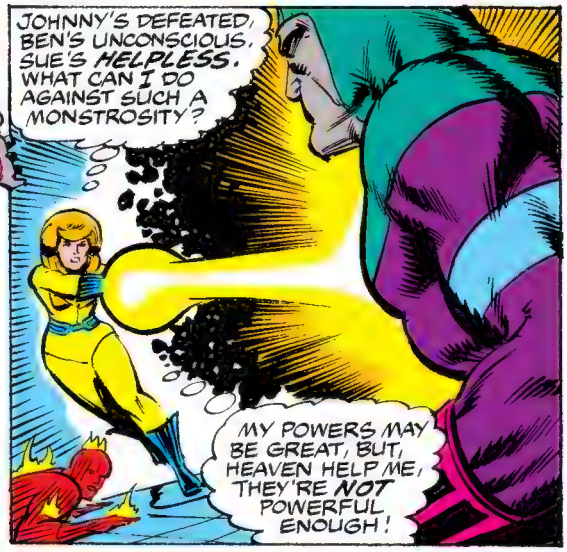
"DEFEAT WAS NOT SOMETHING RAMSES TOOK LIGHTLY."
YOU FAILED ME, WIZARD. THE REBEL FOOL WAS MORE POWERFUL THAN YOU.
OUT OF MY SIGHT FOREVER! YOU ARE BANISHED FROM EGYPT!
SO IT IS WRITTEN, SO IT IS DONE!
"I TOOK TO THE DESERT AND WANDERED ITS BROILING SANDS FOR NINETY YEARS. AND THEN, WHEN ALL LOOKED THEIR BLEAKEST!
"--I CAME ACROSS-- THE TEMPLE!
"THROUGH ITS EMERALD GATES I TROD, AND BEFORE ME I FOUND--THE FLAMING KA--THE SPIRIT STONE!
"IT SPOKE TO ME, GAVE ME A MISSION, AND THEN BID ME TO PLACE IT ON MY HEAD AS A CROWN.
"WHEN I DID AS INSTRUCTED, I WAS NO LONGER A MAN. SOMEHOW I WAS REBORN-- INTO THE ETERNAL ENIGMA-- INTO... THE SPHINX!
I TELL YOU THIS SO YOU MAY KNOW. I AM MORE THAN FIVE THOUSAND YEARS OLD.
I AM IMMORTAL, AND THEREFORE-- INVINCIBLE!
BUT MORE THAN ALL THAT, I HAVE MY SEARCH-- AND IT IS A SEARCH FOR--THE ANSWER!
"IN SO SEARCHING, I RECENTLY BATTLED ANOTHER OF YOUR KIND--A CHILD WHO FOUGHT LIKE A MAN.
" A MAN CALLED --NOVA! *
* NOVA #11 --MARV.
"HE HELD PART OF MY QUEST IN HIS MIND, BUT I WAS UNABLE TO STEAL IT. AND SO I SEARCHED ON UNTIL I DISCOVERED THE GREAT REFUGE!
"THERE I FOUND A CORRUPT WORM NAMED THRAXON. I GAVE HIM TEMPORARY POWERS --TO USE AS I COMMANDED, TO LURE THE OTHER, MORE POWERFUL, INHUMANS TO ME.

AND WHEN HE HAD DONE HIS DUTY, I STRIPPED HIM OF HIS POWERS AND LEFT HIM THE EARTH-CRAWLING SLUG HE HAD ALWAYS BEEN.
YOU SEE, I DISCOVERED THAT WITHIN THE ONE CALLED BLACK BOLT, LAY AN INCREDIBLE POWER SOURCE, PERHAPS THE GREATEST IN THE UNIVERSE ITSELF.
"AND THUS I CREATED THIS SHIP AS AN AMPLIFIER, TO SIPHON BLACK BOLT'S ELECTRON ENERGY AND USE IT TO ASSIMILATE THE MINDS OF EVERY MAN ON EARTH.
"WITHIN ONE SUCH MIND I WILL FIND WHAT I NEED."
HOTSHOT, THE ONLY MIND THAT'S GONNA BE MISSIN'--IS YERS!
'CAUSE WHEN I GET THRU WITH YA, THEY AIN'T GONNA BE ABLE TA FIND YER BLINKIN' BRAIN!
YOU MAY BE POWERFUL, BENJAMIN GRIMM, BUT YOU ARE HARDLY A FITTING FOE FOR THE SPHINX.
YOURS IS ONLY THE POWER OF BRUTE STRENGTH!
SKWAMM!
WHILE MINE IS THE POWER OF--THE MIND ITSELF!
KLOW
NERTS! TUMBLIN' BACK, CAN'T EVEN STOP MYSELF!
BEN!
"LOOK AT HIM, REED! HE'S HEADING TOWARD THE WALLS!
"OH, NO! HE'S SMASHED HIS WAY THROUGH --TO SPACE!
"WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING--BEFORE BEN DIES IN THE VACUUM!"

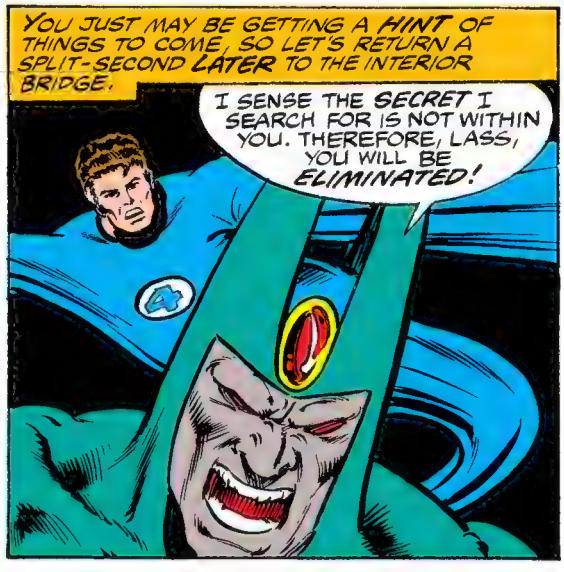
I'VE GOT HIM, JOHNNY. BUT THERE ISN'T MUCH AIR IN MY FORCE FIELD!
WE'VE GOT TO BRING HIM BACK BEFORE IT RUNS OUT.
YOU WORRY ABOUT THAT, SIS, I'M GOING AFTER STONE-FACE!
AND I'LL SEAL THAT HOLE WITH MY POWERS, JOHNNY.

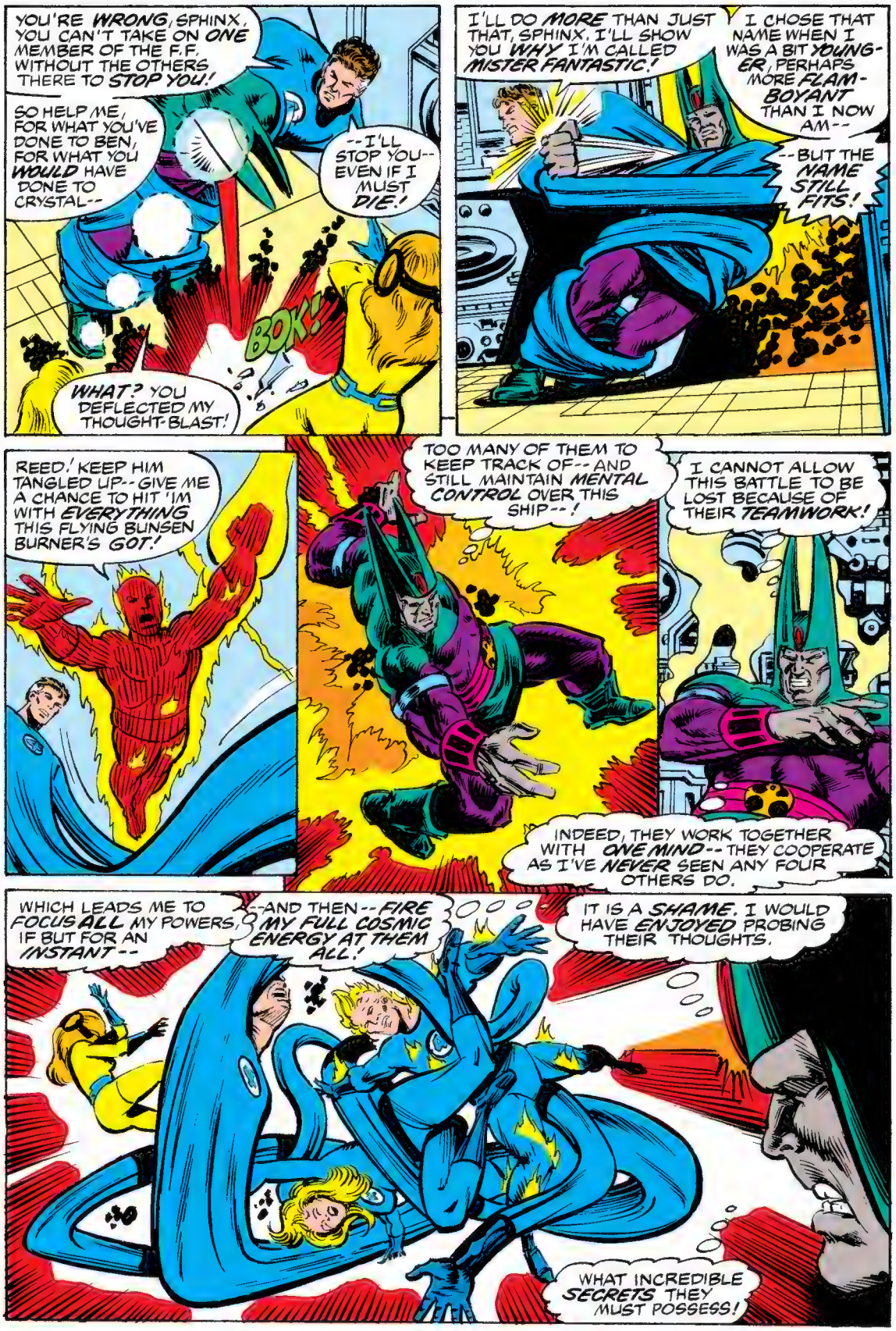

THANKS, CRYS--WITHOUT OXYGEN, I COULDN'T DO THIS!
HUNH? HE'S LAUGHING OFF MY FLAME BLAST!
WHAT'S THIS BOZO MADE OF, ANYWAY?

MORE THAN YOUR MIND CAN POSSIBLY UNDERSTAND, YOUNG ONE!
OOOOFF!
SKAK!
WUR

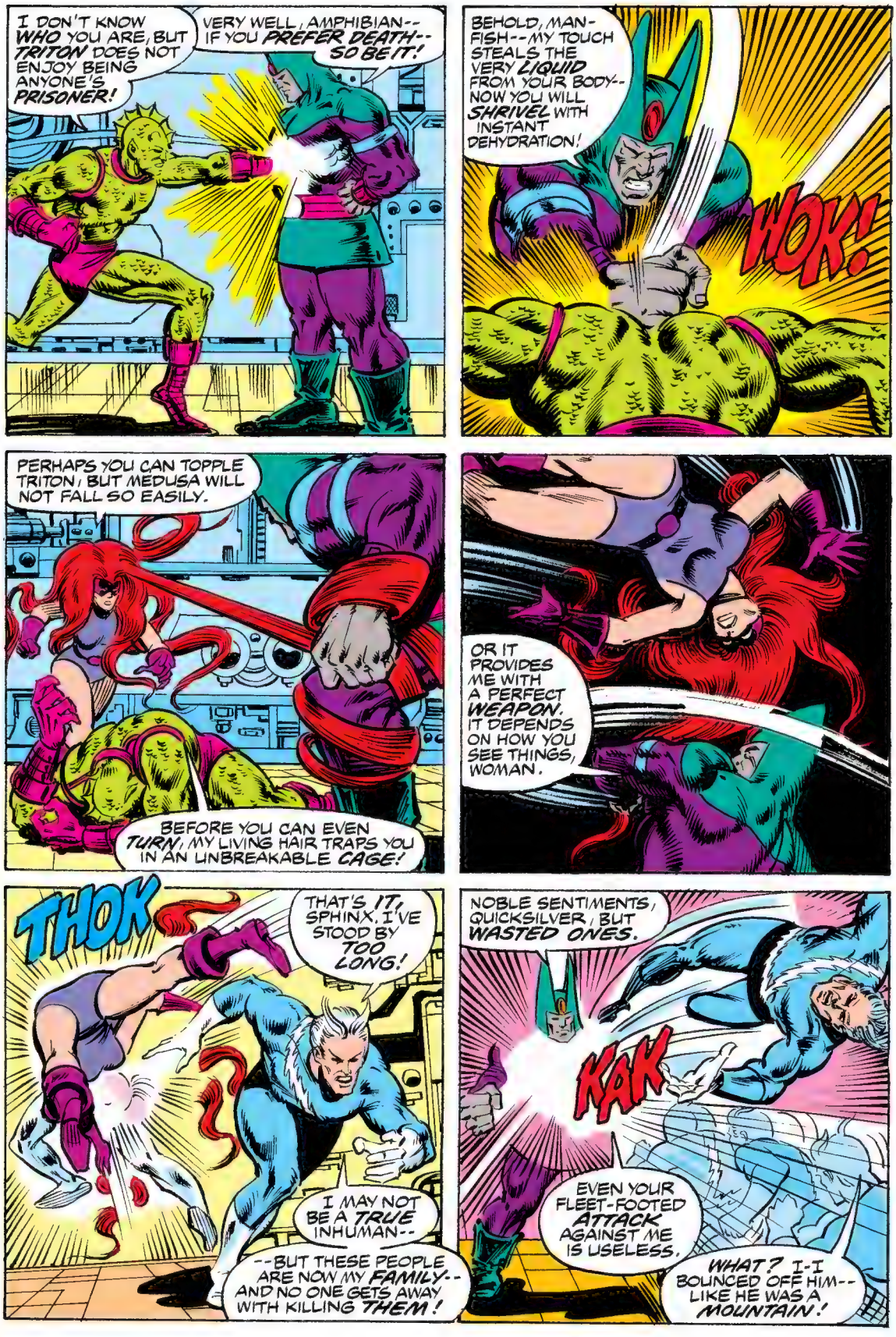

JOHNNY'S DEFEATED, BEN'S UNCONSCIOUS, SUE'S HELPLESS. WHAT CAN I DO AGAINST SUCH A MONSTROSITY?
MY POWERS MAY BE GREAT, BUT, HEAVEN HELP ME, THEY'RE NOT POWERFUL ENOUGH!

"YOU ARE CORRECT, LASS. YOU CANNOT DEFEAT ME. BUT I CAN DESTROY YOU!"
AS THE SPHINX RAISES A POWERFUL ARM TO SIGNAL CRYSTAL'S DEMISE, WE LOOK ELSEWHERE...
WURF!
...DOWN TO THE BOWELS OF THE SHIP, WHERE A CAPTURED BLACK BOLT AND COMPANY WATCH A NEW FRIEND APPEAR.


YOU JUST MAY BE GETTING A HINT OF THINGS TO COME, SO LET'S RETURN A SPLIT-SECOND LATER TO THE INTERIOR BRIDGE.
I SENSE THE SECRET I SEARCH FOR IS NOT WITHIN YOU. THEREFORE, LASS, YOU WILL BE ELIMINATED!

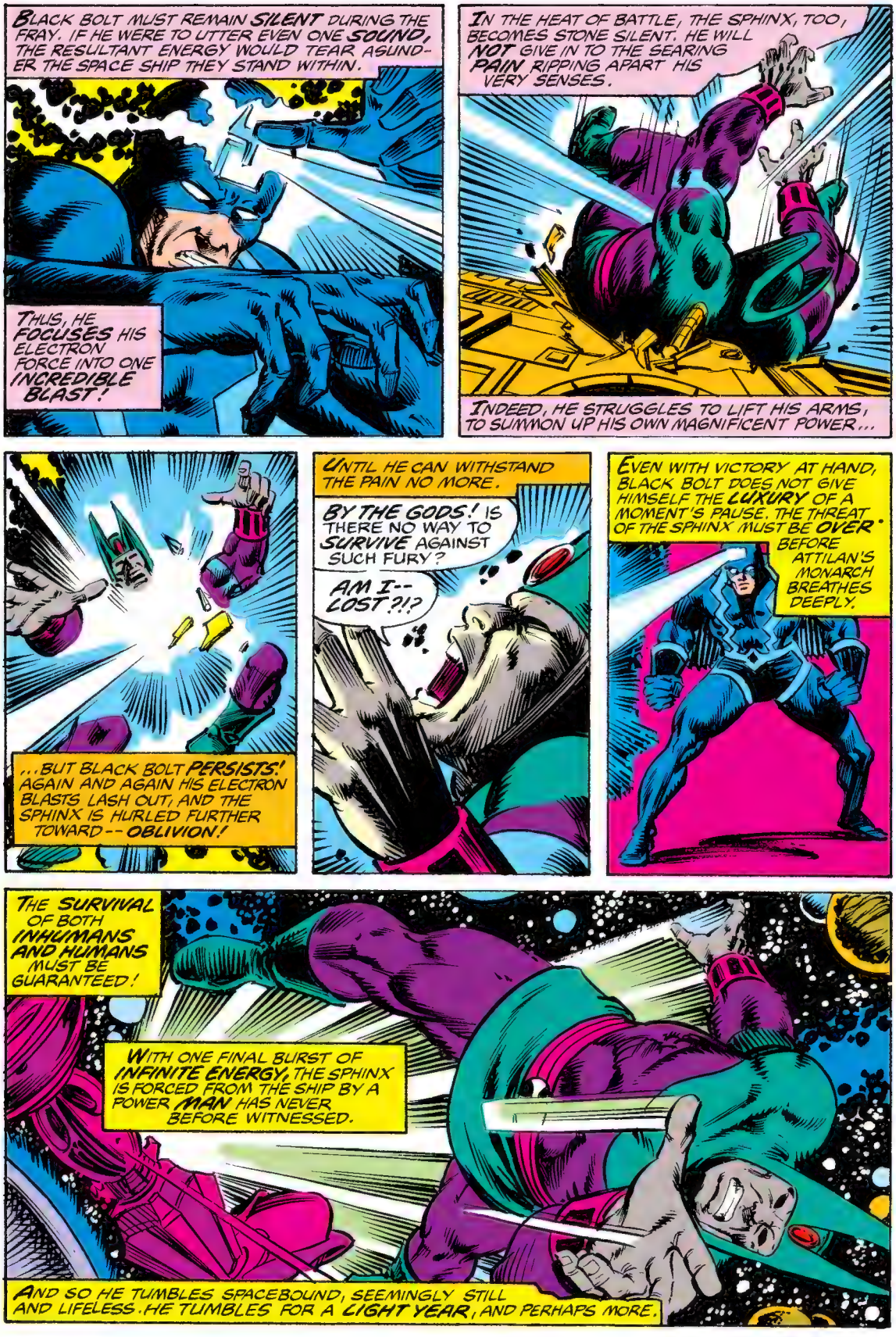

YOU'RE WRONG, SPHINX, YOU CAN'T TAKE ON ONE MEMBER OF THE F.F. WITHOUT THE OTHERS THERE TO STOP YOU!
SO HELP ME, FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO BEN, FOR WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE DONE TO CRYSTAL--
--I'LL STOP YOU-- EVEN IF I MUST DIE!
BOK!
WHAT? YOU DEFLECTED MY THOUGHT-BLAST!
I'LL DO MORE THAN JUST THAT, SPHINX. I'LL SHOW YOU WHY I'M CALLED MISTER FANTASTIC!
I CHOSE THAT NAME WHEN I WAS A BIT YOUNGER, PERHAPS MORE FLAMBOYANT THAN I NOW AM--
--BUT THE NAME STILL FITS!
REED! KEEP HIM TANGLED UP-- GIVE ME A CHANCE TO HIT 'IM WITH EVERYTHING THIS FLYING BUNSEN BURNER'S GOT!
TOO MANY OF THEM TO KEEP TRACK OF-- AND STILL MAINTAIN MENTAL CONTROL OVER THIS SHIP--!
I CANNOT ALLOW THIS BATTLE TO BE LOST BECAUSE OF THEIR TEAMWORK!
INDEED, THEY WORK TOGETHER WITH ONE MIND-- THEY COOPERATE AS I'VE NEVER SEEN ANY FOUR OTHERS DO.
WHICH LEADS ME TO FOCUS ALL MY POWERS, IF BUT FOR AN INSTANT--
--AND THEN-- FIRE MY FULL COSMIC ENERGY AT THEM ALL!
IT IS A SHAME. I WOULD HAVE ENJOYED PROBING THEIR THOUGHTS.
WHAT INCREDIBLE SECRETS THEY MUST POSSESS!

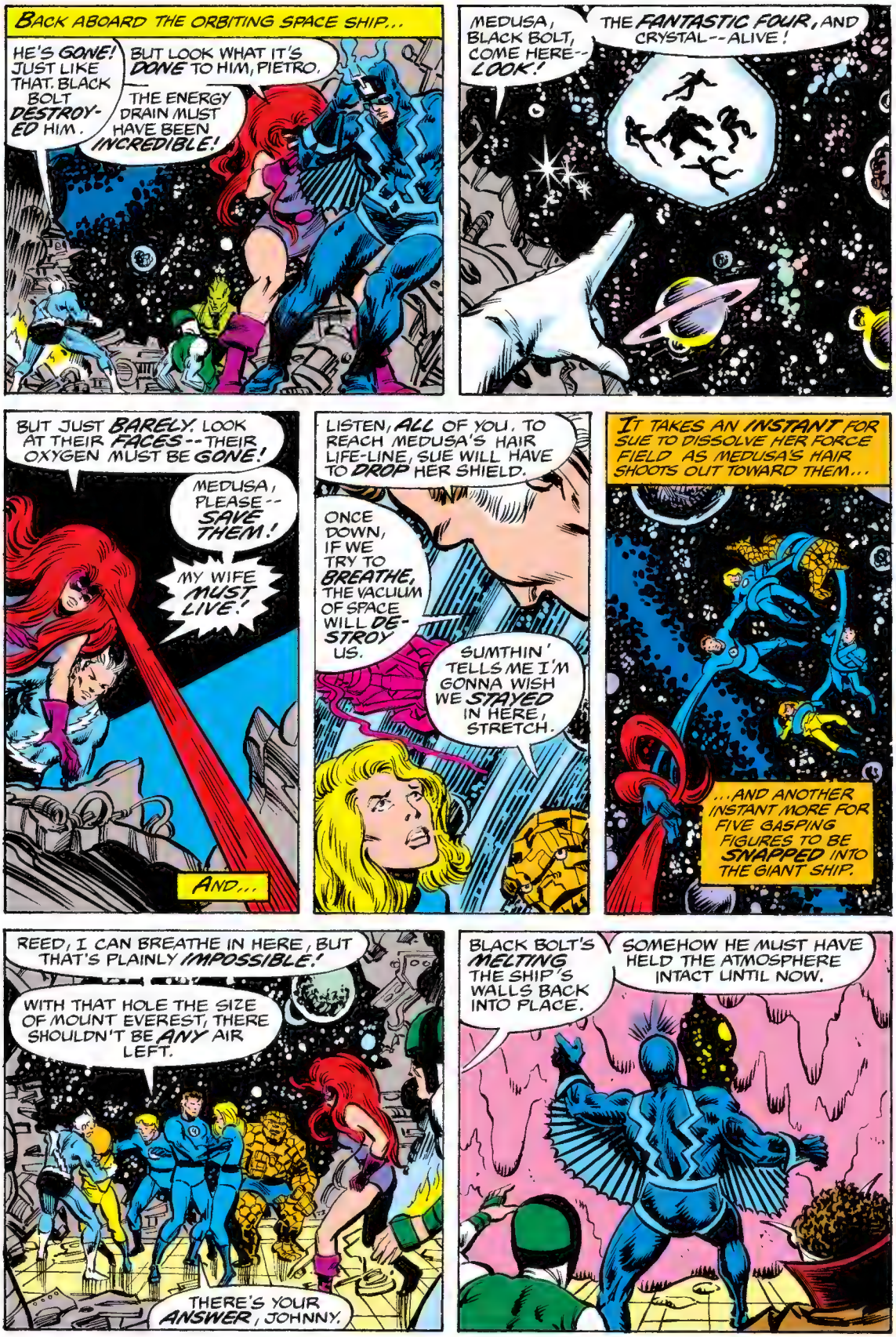
A MOMENT BEFORE, THEY WERE INSIDE THE GIANT SHIP. NOW THEY FIND THEMSELVES HURLED UNCONTROLLABLY INTO THE DARK AND DEADLY RECESSES OF DEEP SPACE!
ONLY CHANCE -- EXTEND MY FORCE FIELD OVER US ALL!
ANY ORDINARY HUMAN WOULD INSTANTLY PERISH IN THE FORBODING COLD AND VACUUM--
PAM
--BUT THESE ARE THE MEMBERS OF-- THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
AND THEY CAN HARDLY BE CALLED--"ORDINARY!"
BUT, UNLESS WE MOVE QUICKLY, IT WILL SOON FADE!
AND THEN--THEN WE'LL ALL BE DOOMED!
MEANWHILE...
THEY ARE GONE, AND NOW--IT IS TIME!
IN MOMENTS I WILL RIP AWAY THE MINDS OF EVERYONE ON EARTH!
AND, AT LONG LAST, THE SECRET I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR SO VERY LONG-- WILL BE MINE!
SNIK
WHAT? NOTHING? BUT, THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE... UNLESS--
UNLESS YOU NO LONGER HAVE A POWER SOURCE, RIGHT?
WHAT?
YOU'RE ALL FREE? SO, IT SEEMS I MUST SUFFER YET ANOTHER DELAY BEFORE I CAN FULFILL MY DESTINY.
LOCKJAW FREED US, AND NOW- THAT WE'RE TOGETHER...
...YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO DEFEAT THE INHUMANS AGAIN!!

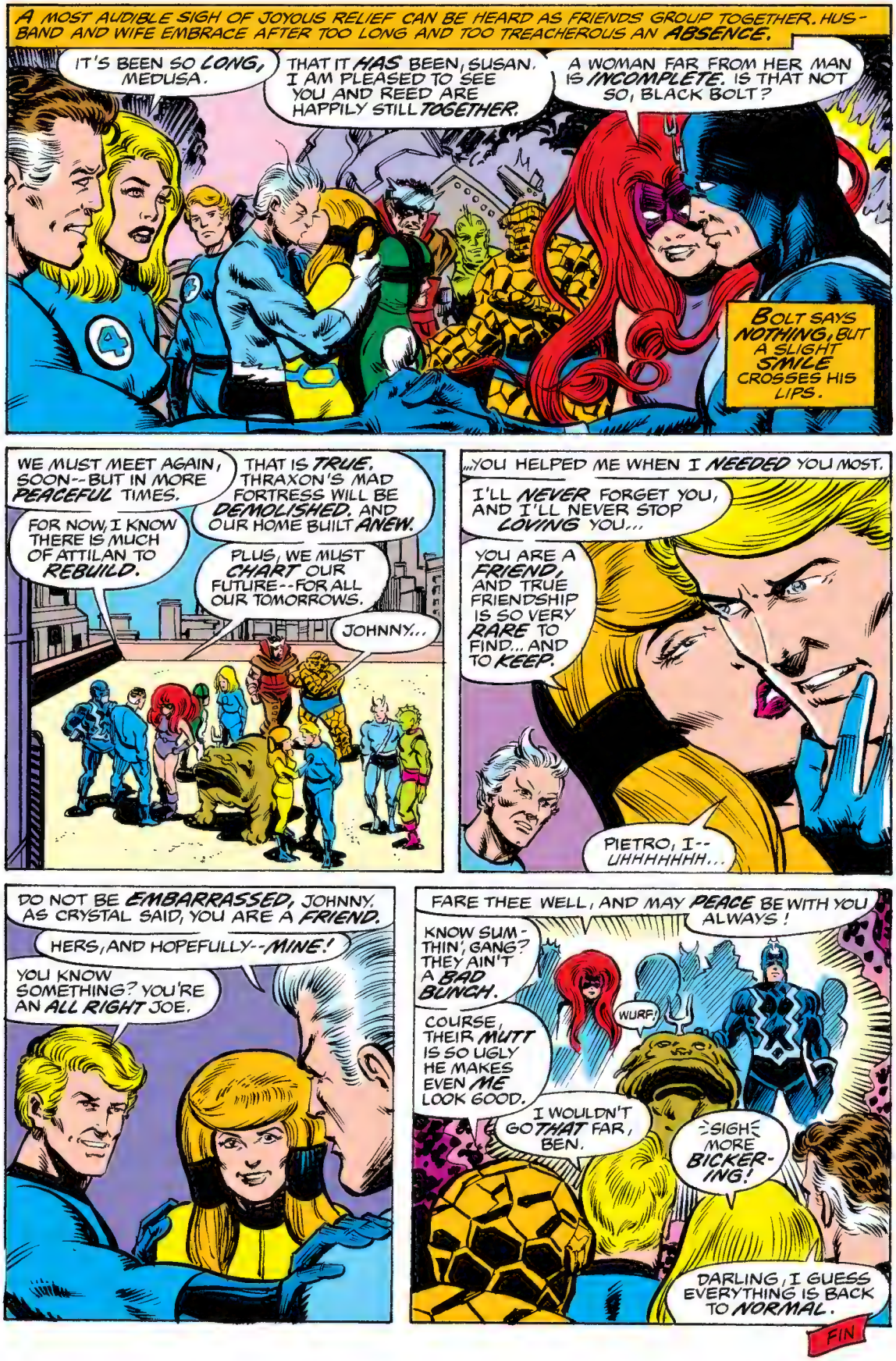

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, BUT TRITON DOES NOT ENJOY BEING ANYONE'S PRISONER!
VERY WELL, AMPHIBIAN-- IF YOU PREFER DEATH-- SO BE IT!
BEHOLD, MAN-FISH--MY TOUCH STEALS THE VERY LIQUID FROM YOUR BODY-- NOW YOU WILL SHRIVEL WITH INSTANT DEHYDRATION!
WHOK!
PERHAPS YOU CAN TOPPLE TRITON, BUT MEDUSA WILL NOT FALL SO EASILY.
BEFORE YOU CAN EVEN TURN, MY LIVING HAIR TRAPS YOU IN AN UNBREAKABLE CAGE!
OR IT PROVIDES ME WITH A PERFECT WEAPON. IT DEPENDS ON HOW YOU SEE THINGS, WOMAN.
THOK
THAT'S IT, SPHINX, I'VE STOOD BY TOO LONG!
I MAY NOT BE A TRUE INHUMAN--
--BUT THESE PEOPLE ARE NOW MY FAMILY-- AND NO ONE GETS AWAY WITH KILLING THEM!
NOBLE SENTIMENTS, QUICKSILVER, BUT WASTED ONES.
KAK
EVEN YOUR FLEET-FOOTED ATTACK AGAINST ME IS USELESS.
WHAT? I-I BOUNCED OFF HIM-- LIKE HE WAS A MOUNTAIN!

AGON'S GENES! I AM FED UP WITH ALL THIS! ALWAYS WE INHUMANS ARE HUNTED! ALWAYS SOMEONE SEEKS TO DESTROY US!
KRASH
BUT, GORGON SWEARS THIS-- NEVER AGAIN! NOT EVEN IF I MUST ERADICATE ALL THESE FOOLS MYSELF!
STOMP
FOR FIVE THOUSAND YEARS I HAVE TROD THIS PLANET EARTH--
--AND ALWAYS I FIND CRETINS WHO BELIEVE MERE POWER CAN DEFEAT ME!
DOLT! I AM NO LACKEY TO BE DEALT WITH! I AM NO COMMON THUG YOU MUST FACE!
MY POWER HAS CREATED UNTOLD WARS IN YOUR HISTORIES. WARS-- AND MORE--FAMINE--PLAGUES! THE GAUNTLET OF HUMAN MISERIES!
SINGLEHANDLY, I BROUGHT DOWN THE ROMAN EMPIRE. AND THROUGH MY INFLUENCES, CREATED MIGHTY WARRIOR STATES!
MY POWER HAS CHANGED THE COURSE OF THE WORLD--AND I'VE DONE IT ALL TO REACH MY GOAL...TO ANSWER MY CALL TO DESTINY!
AND YOU INSECTS BELIEVE YOU CAN STOP ME NOW--WHEN I AM SO VERY CLOSE TO LEARNING THE SECRET I MUST HAVE?!
KWAMM
BUT, SILENT AS THE SUMMER BREEZE, COMES THE POWER OF-- A RAGING HURRICANE!
A HURRICANE NAMED BLACK BOLT, LEADER OF THE IN-CREDIBLE, UNCANNY INHUM-ANS!
BOK!
IMPOSSIBLE! I DID NOT SENSE HIS APPROACH!
BUT IT MATTERS NOT. THE POWERS OF THE KA-STONE-- THE POWERS THAT STRETCH MY MIND TO PERFORM MIRACLES HUMAN AND INHUMANS ALIKE CAN HARDLY DREAM OF...
...WILL BRING DOWN THE DARK-WINGED ONE-- WITH EASE!

BUT SILENT BLACK BOLT MERELY GRIMACES. HE KNOWS HIS POWERS, THEIR STRENGTHS, AND MORE--THEIR LIMITS.
HE IS FULLY AWARE THAT NO MAN CAN FOR LONG WITHSTAND THE DREADNAUGHT POWER OF HIS ELECTRON BLAST.
NO MAN, INCLUDING THE SELF-PROCLAIMED MAN GOD-- THE SPHINX!
AGGGHHH!
SKAKK
WHAMMO
NEVER BEFORE HAVE I EXPERIENCED SUCH RAW, UNBRIDLED POWER! NEVER HAVE I MET ANYONE SUCH AS YOU, MONARCH OF ATTILAN!
INDEED, YOU ARE ALMOST AN EQUAL OF THE SPHINX.
I WOULD OFFER YOU PARTNERSHIP IN MY GRAND DESIGNS, BLACK BOLT, BUT ULTIMATE POWER CANNOT BE SHARED... EVEN BY TWO SUCH INCREDIBLE BEINGS AS OURSELVES!
THEREFORE, I MUST BE RID OF YOU-- INSTANTLY!
SKAK
BUT BLACK BOLT REACTS WITH SHOCKING SPEED.


BLACK BOLT MUST REMAIN SILENT DURING THE FRAY. IF HE WERE TO UTTER EVEN ONE SOUND, THE RESULTANT ENERGY WOULD TEAR ASUNDER THE SPACE SHIP THEY STAND WITHIN.
THUS, HE FOCUSES HIS ELECTRON FORCE INTO ONE INCREDIBLE BLAST!
IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE, THE SPHINX, TOO, BECOMES STONE SILENT. HE WILL NOT GIVE IN TO THE SEARING PAIN RIPPING APART HIS VERY SENSES.
INDEED, HE STRUGGLES TO LIFT HIS ARMS, TO SUMMON UP HIS OWN MAGNIFICENT POWER...
...BUT BLACK BOLT PERSISTS! AGAIN AND AGAIN HIS ELECTRON BLASTS LASH OUT, AND THE SPHINX IS HURLED FURTHER TOWARD -- OBLIVION!
UNTIL HE CAN WITHSTAND THE PAIN NO MORE.
BY THE GODS! IS THERE NO WAY TO SURVIVE AGAINST SUCH FURY?
AM I-- LOST?!?
EVEN WITH VICTORY AT HAND, BLACK BOLT DOES NOT GIVE HIMSELF THE LUXURY OF A MOMENT'S PAUSE. THE THREAT OF THE SPHINX MUST BE OVER. BEFORE ATTILAN'S MONARCH BREATHES DEEPLY.
THE SURVIVAL OF BOTH INHUMANS AND HUMANS MUST BE GUARANTEED!
WITH ONE FINAL BURST OF INFINITE ENERGY, THE SPHINX IS FORCED FROM THE SHIP BY A POWER MAN HAS NEVER BEFORE WITNESSED.
AND SO HE TUMBLES SPACEBOUND, SEEMINGLY STILL AND LIFELESS. HE TUMBLES FOR A LIGHT YEAR, AND PERHAPS MORE.


BACK ABOARD THE ORBITING SPACE SHIP...
HE'S GONE! JUST LIKE THAT. BLACK BOLT DESTROYED HIM.
BUT LOOK WHAT IT'S DONE TO HIM, PIETRO.
THE ENERGY DRAIN MUST HAVE BEEN INCREDIBLE!
MEDUSA, BLACK BOLT, COME HERE--LOOK!
THE FANTASTIC FOUR, AND CRYSTAL--ALIVE!
BUT JUST BARELY. LOOK AT THEIR FACES--THEIR OXYGEN MUST BE GONE!
MEDUSA, PLEASE--SAVE THEM!
MY WIFE MUST LIVE!
AND...
LISTEN, ALL OF YOU. TO REACH MEDUSA'S HAIR LIFE-LINE, SUE WILL HAVE TO DROP HER SHIELD.
ONCE DOWN, IF WE TRY TO BREATHE, THE VACUUM OF SPACE WILL DESTROY US.
SUMTHIN' TELLS ME I'M GONNA WISH WE STAYED IN HERE, STRETCH.
IT TAKES AN INSTANT FOR SUE TO DISSOLVE HER FORCE FIELD AS MEDUSA'S HAIR SHOOTS OUT TOWARD THEM...
...AND ANOTHER INSTANT MORE FOR FIVE GASPING FIGURES TO BE SNAPPED INTO THE GIANT SHIP.
REED, I CAN BREATHE IN HERE, BUT THAT'S PLAINLY IMPOSSIBLE!
WITH THAT HOLE THE SIZE OF MOUNT EVEREST, THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANY AIR LEFT.
THERE'S YOUR ANSWER, JOHNNY.
BLACK BOLT'S MELTING THE SHIP'S WALLS BACK INTO PLACE.
SOMEHOW HE MUST HAVE HELD THE ATMOSPHERE INTACT UNTIL NOW.


A MOST AUDIBLE SIGH OF JOYOUS RELIEF CAN BE HEARD AS FRIENDS GROUP TOGETHER. HUSBAND AND WIFE EMBRACE AFTER TOO LONG AND TOO TREACHEROUS AN ABSENCE.
IT'S BEEN SO LONG, MEDUSA.
THAT IT HAS BEEN, SUSAN. I AM PLEASED TO SEE YOU AND REED ARE HAPPILY STILL TOGETHER.
A WOMAN FAR FROM HER MAN IS INCOMPLETE. IS THAT NOT SO, BLACK BOLT?
BOLT SAYS NOTHING, BUT A SLIGHT SMILE CROSSES HIS LIPS.
WE MUST MEET AGAIN, SOON--BUT IN MORE PEACEFUL TIMES.
THAT IS TRUE. THRAXON'S MAD FORTRESS WILL BE DEMOLISHED. AND OUR HOME BUILT ANEW.
FOR NOW, I KNOW THERE IS MUCH OF ATTILAN TO REBUILD.
PLUS, WE MUST CHART OUR FUTURE--FOR ALL OUR TOMORROWS.
JOHNNY...
"YOU HELPED ME WHEN I NEEDED YOU MOST.
I'LL NEVER FORGET YOU, AND I'LL NEVER STOP LOVING YOU...
YOU ARE A FRIEND, AND TRUE FRIENDSHIP IS SO VERY RARE TO FIND... AND TO KEEP.
PIETRO, I-- UHHHHHHH...
DO NOT BE EMBARRASSED, JOHNNY. AS CRYSTAL SAID, YOU ARE A FRIEND.
HERS, AND HOPEFULLY--MINE!
YOU KNOW SOMETHING? YOU'RE AN ALL RIGHT JOE.
FARE THEE WELL, AND MAY PEACE BE WITH YOU ALWAYS!
KNOW SUMTHIN', GANG? THEY AIN'T A BAD BUNCH.
COURSE, THEIR MUTT IS SO UGLY HE MAKES EVEN ME LOOK GOOD.
WURP!
I WOULDN'T GO THAT FAR, BEN.
SIGH MORE BICKERING!
DARLING, I GUESS EVERYTHING IS BACK TO NORMAL.
FIN

FANTASTIC FOUR
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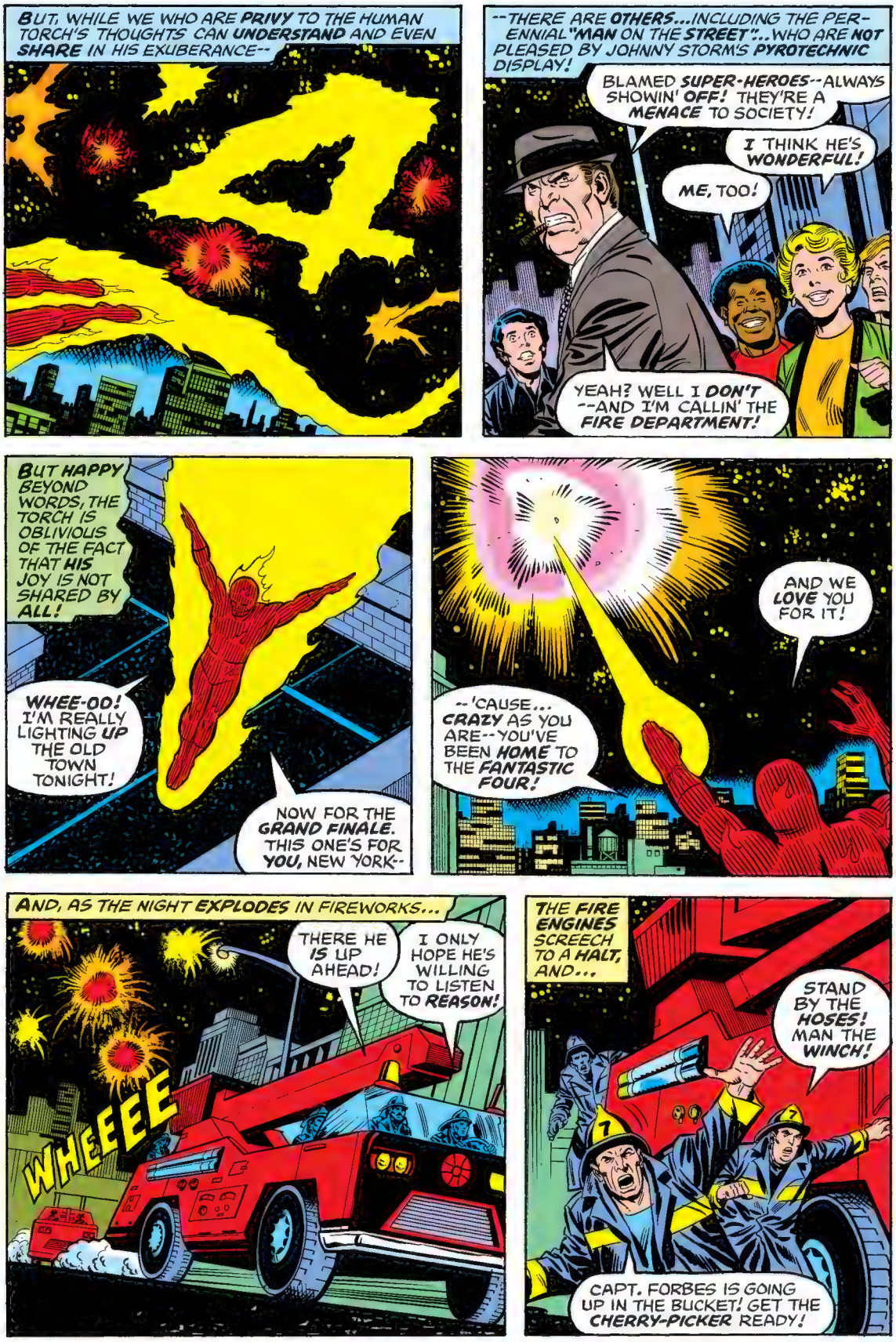
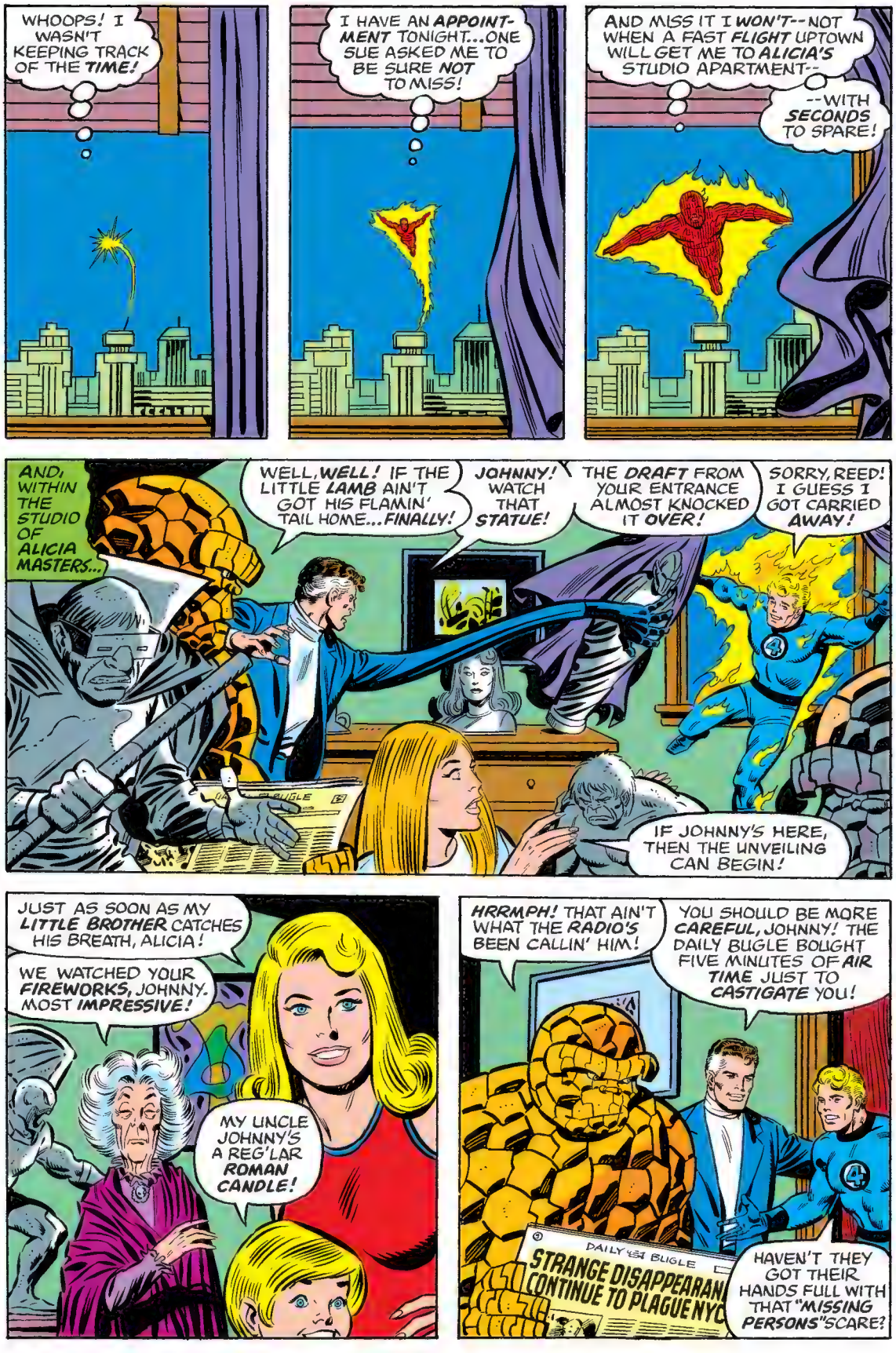
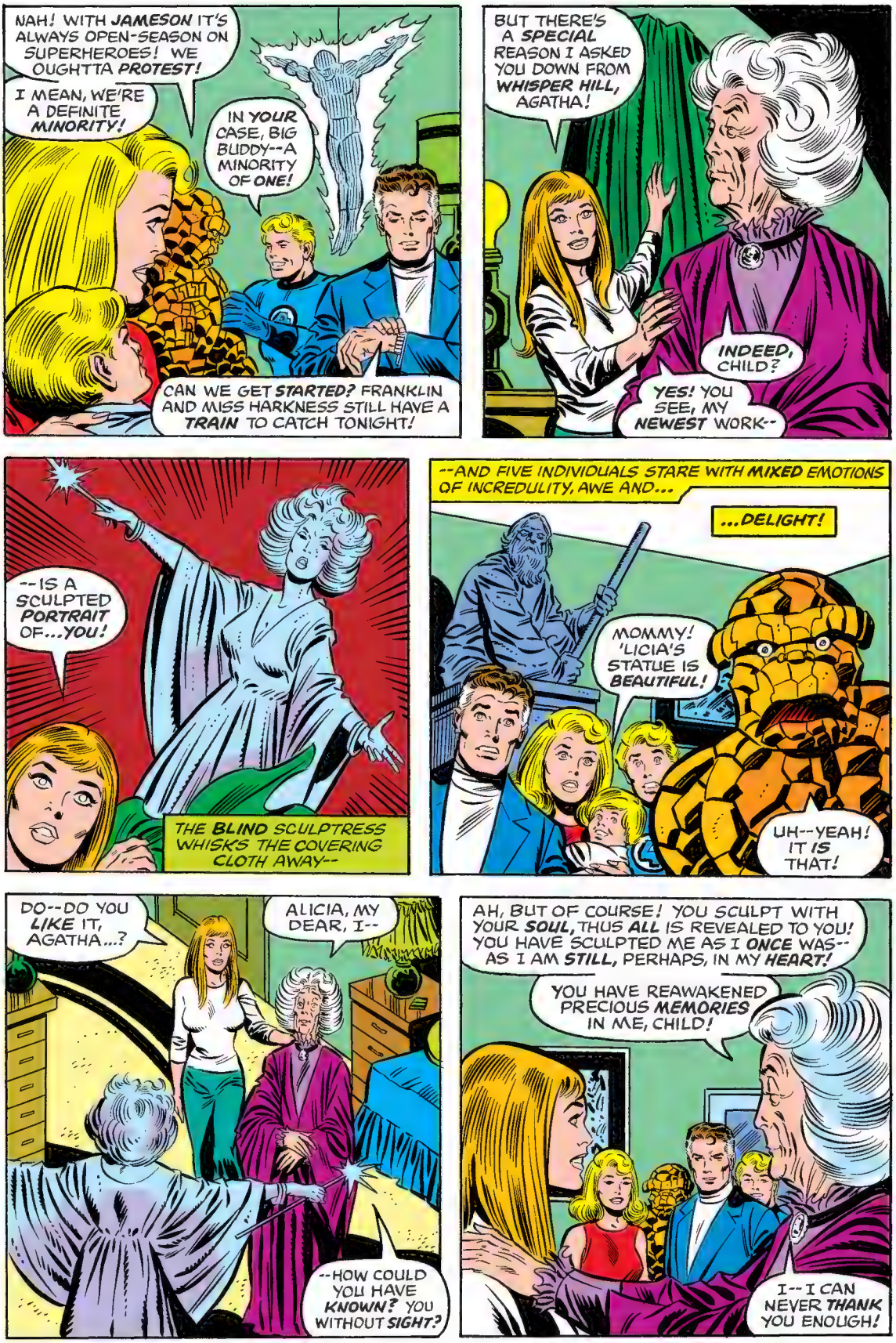
WA-HOO! THE F.F. ARE A TEAM AGAIN!
CHAPTER 1
NIGHTLIFE
GRUDGE NOT JOHNNY STORM HIS MOMENT OF EUPHORIA FOR, AFTER MONTHS OF HEARTACHE, LONELINESS AND UNCERTAINTY--
--THE FABULOUS FANTASTIC FOUR ARE INDEED REUNITED ONCE MORE!*
*AS CHRONICLED IN FF # 200... NOW ON SALE!--Marv.

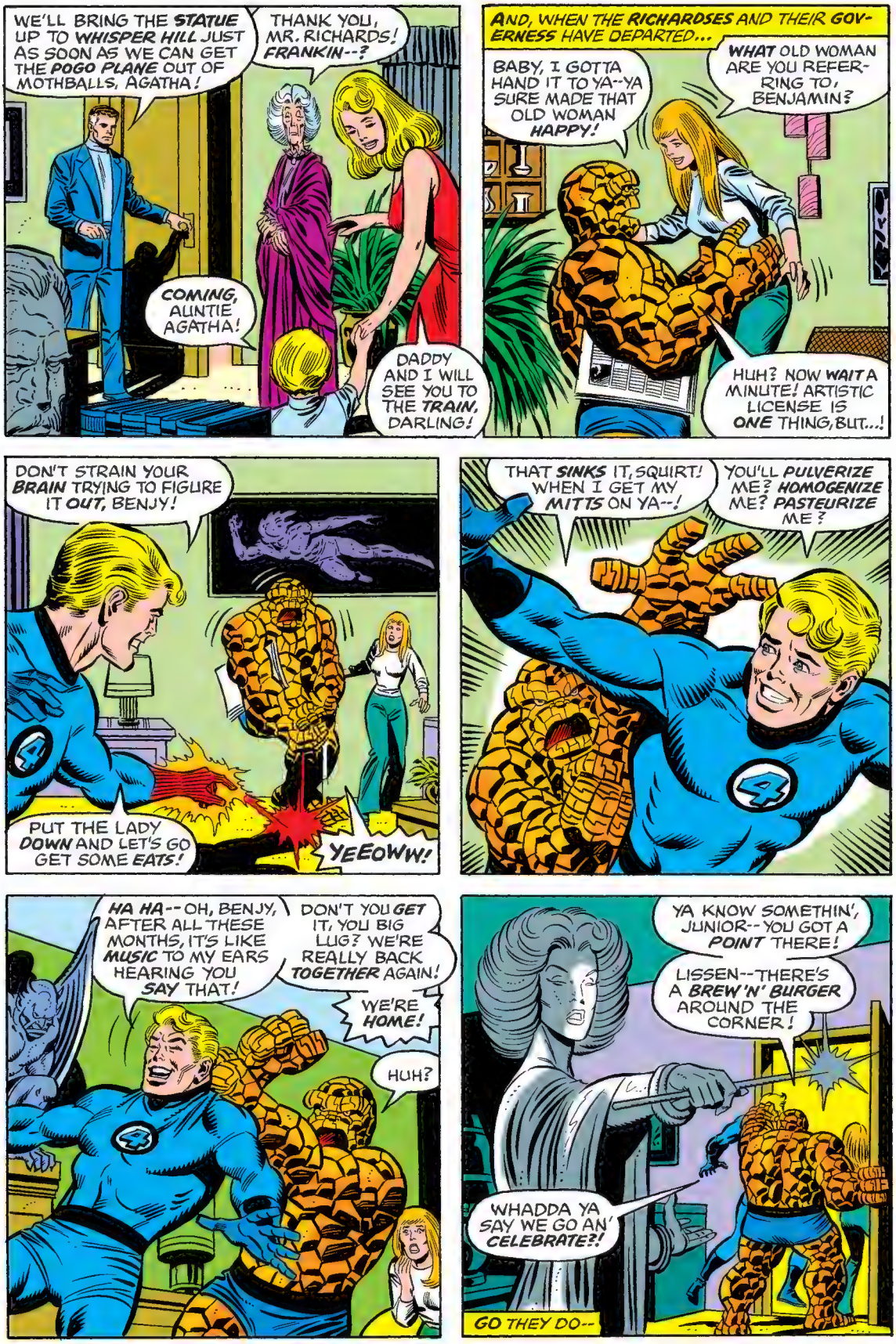
C920


BUT, WHILE WE WHO ARE PRIVY TO THE HUMAN TORCH'S THOUGHTS CAN UNDERSTAND AND EVEN SHARE IN HIS EXUBERANCE--
--THERE ARE OTHERS...INCLUDING THE PERENNIAL "MAN ON THE STREET"...WHO ARE NOT PLEASED BY JOHNNY STORM'S PYROTECHNIC DISPLAY!
BLAMED SUPER-HEROES--ALWAYS SHOWIN' OFF! THEY'RE A MENACE TO SOCIETY!
I THINK HE'S WONDERFUL!
ME, TOO!
YEAH? WELL I DON'T --AND I'M CALLIN' THE FIRE DEPARTMENT!
BUT HAPPY BEYOND WORDS, THE TORCH IS OBLIVIOUS OF THE FACT THAT HIS JOY IS NOT SHARED BY ALL!
WHEE-OO! I'M REALLY LIGHTING UP THE OLD TOWN TONIGHT!
NOW FOR THE GRAND FINALE. THIS ONE'S FOR YOU, NEW YORK--
AND WE LOVE YOU FOR IT!
--'CAUSE... CRAZY AS YOU ARE--YOU'VE BEEN HOME TO THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
AND, AS THE NIGHT EXPLODES IN FIREWORKS...
THERE HE IS UP AHEAD!
I ONLY HOPE HE'S WILLING TO LISTEN TO REASON!
WHEEEE
THE FIRE ENGINES SCREECH TO A HALT, AND...
STAND BY THE HOSES! MAN THE WINCH!
CAPT. FORBES IS GOING UP IN THE BUCKET! GET THE CHERRY-PICKER READY!

AND SO...
TORCH! YOU'VE GOT TO STOP THIS...NOW!
HUH? BUT I WAS JUST TRYING TO PROVIDE A LITTLE FREE ENTERTAIN-MENT!
I KNOW THAT, SON... AND A LOT OF FOLKS APPRECIATE IT--BUT THIS TOWN'S BEEN DRY AS A TINDERBOX FOR THE LAST THREE WEEKS, AND...
AND A FEW NERVOUS NELLIES DECIDED TO REPORT ME AS A FIRE HAZARD, HUH?
OKAY, CAP'N--TONIGHT I CAN EVEN DEAL WITH THE FACT THAT I'M NOT UNIVERSALLY LOVED!
AND I DON'T WANT TO MAKE YOUR JOB ANY HARDER, SO...
FLAME ON!
AND, AS CAPTAIN FORBES WATCHES JOHNNY'S BLAZING TRAIL FADE IN THE DISTANCE...
SORRY, TORCH--I CAN IMAGINE HOW IT MUST FEEL TO SOAR ABOVE IT ALL... YOUNG, ALIVE AND AFLAME!
NYFD
THIS TOWN --THIS WORLD OWES YOU SO MUCH...AND WE REPAY YOU BY DAMPENING YOUR SPIRITS!
ALL RIGHT, BOYS--I'M COMING DOWN!
BUT, ON THIS NIGHT, THE HUMAN TORCH'S SPIRITS ARE FAR FROM DEPRESSED!
GOSH, I DIDN'T REALIZE PEOPLE WOULD GET SO UPSET!
BUT THAT FIREMAN HANDLED IT OKAY! HECK--THOSE GUYS ARE THE REAL HEROES IN THIS CITY!
HEY! THERE'S THE BAXTER BUILDING--OUR OLD HEAD-QUARTERS!
THE TOP FLOORS HAVE BEEN EMPTY SINCE THE F.F. SPLIT UP!*
I WONDER IF REED PLANS FOR US TO MOVE BACK IN?
AH, WHO CARES WHERE WE LIVE--AS LONG AS WE'RE A TEAM AGAIN?!
*SEE FF #191--MARV.

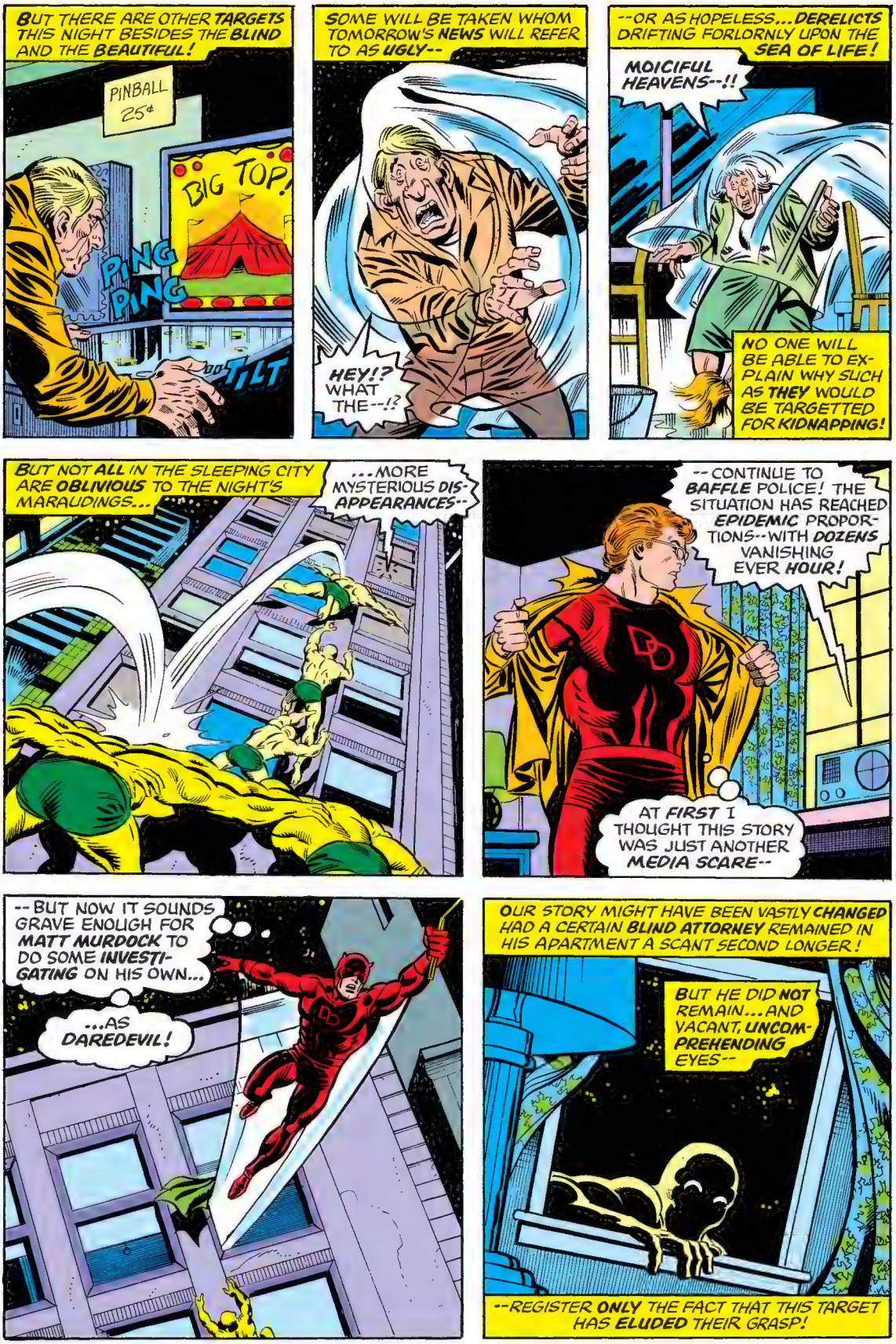

WHOOPS! I WASN'T KEEPING TRACK OF THE TIME!
I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT TONIGHT...ONE SUE ASKED ME TO BE SURE NOT TO MISS!
AND MISS IT I WON'T--NOT WHEN A FAST FLIGHT UPTOWN WILL GET ME TO ALICIA'S STUDIO APARTMENT--
--WITH SECONDS TO SPARE!
AND, WITHIN THE STUDIO OF ALICIA MASTERS...
WELL, WELL! IF THE LITTLE LAMB AIN'T GOT HIS FLAMIN' TAIL HOME...FINALLY!
JOHNNY! WATCH THAT STATUE!
THE DRAFT FROM YOUR ENTRANCE ALMOST KNOCKED IT OVER!
SORRY, REED! I GUESS I GOT CARRIED AWAY!
IF JOHNNY'S HERE, THEN THE UNVEILING CAN BEGIN!
JUST AS SOON AS MY LITTLE BROTHER CATCHES HIS BREATH, ALICIA!
WE WATCHED YOUR FIREWORKS, JOHNNY. MOST IMPRESSIVE!
MY UNCLE JOHNNY'S A REG'LAR ROMAN CANDLE!
HRRMPH! THAT AIN'T WHAT THE RADIO'S BEEN CALLIN' HIM!
YOU SHOULD BE MORE CAREFUL, JOHNNY! THE DAILY BUGLE BOUGHT FIVE MINUTES OF AIR TIME JUST TO CASTIGATE YOU!
DAILY BUGLE
STRANGE DISAPPEARANCES CONTINUE TO PLAGUE NYC
HAVEN'T THEY GOT THEIR HANDS FULL WITH THAT "MISSING PERSONS" SCARE?

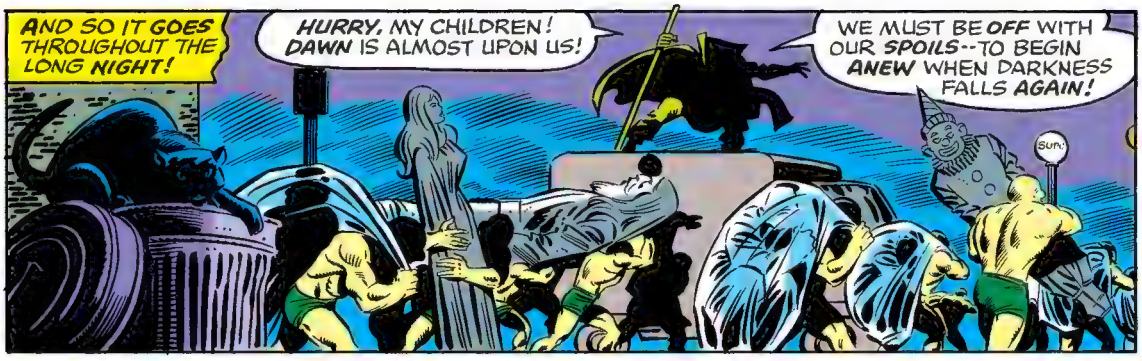

NAH! WITH JAMESON IT'S ALWAYS OPEN-SEASON ON SUPERHEROES! WE OUGHTTA PROTEST!
I MEAN, WE'RE A DEFINITE MINORITY!
IN YOUR CASE, BIG BUDDY--A MINORITY OF ONE!
CAN WE GET STARTED? FRANKLIN AND MISS HARKNESS STILL HAVE A TRAIN TO CATCH TONIGHT!
BUT THERE'S A SPECIAL REASON I ASKED YOU DOWN FROM WHISPER HILL, AGATHA!
INDEED, CHILD?
YES! YOU SEE, MY NEWEST WORK--
--IS A SCULPTED PORTRAIT OF...YOU!
THE BLIND SCULPTRESS WHISKS THE COVERING CLOTH AWAY--
--AND FIVE INDIVIDUALS STARE WITH MIXED EMOTIONS OF INCREDULITY, AWE AND...
...DELIGHT!
MOMMY! 'LICIA'S STATUE IS BEAUTIFUL!
UH--YEAH! IT IS THAT!
DO--DO YOU LIKE IT, AGATHA...?
ALICIA, MY DEAR, I--
--HOW COULD YOU HAVE KNOWN? YOU WITHOUT SIGHT?
AH, BUT OF COURSE! YOU SCULPT WITH YOUR SOUL, THUS ALL IS REVEALED TO YOU! YOU HAVE SCULPTED ME AS I ONCE WAS--AS I AM STILL, PERHAPS, IN MY HEART!
YOU HAVE REAWAKENED PRECIOUS MEMORIES IN ME, CHILD!
I--I CAN NEVER THANK YOU ENOUGH!


WE'LL BRING THE STATUE UP TO WHISPER HILL JUST AS SOON AS WE CAN GET THE POGO PLANE OUT OF MOTHBALLS, AGATHA!
THANK YOU, MR. RICHARDS! FRANKIN--?
COMING, AUNTIE AGATHA!
DADDY AND I WILL SEE YOU TO THE TRAIN, DARLING!
AND, WHEN THE RICHARDSES AND THEIR GOVERNESS HAVE DEPARTED...
BABY, I GOTTA HAND IT TO YA--YA SURE MADE THAT OLD WOMAN HAPPY!
WHAT OLD WOMAN ARE YOU REFERRING TO, BENJAMIN?
HUH? NOW WAIT A MINUTE! ARTISTIC LICENSE IS ONE THING, BUT...!
DON'T STRAIN YOUR BRAIN TRYING TO FIGURE IT OUT, BENJY!
PUT THE LADY DOWN AND LET'S GO GET SOME EATS!
YEEOWW!
THAT SINKS IT, SQUIRT! WHEN I GET MY MITTS ON YA--!
YOU'LL PULVERIZE ME? HOMOGENIZE ME? PASTEURIZE ME?
HA HA--OH, BENJY, AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS, IT'S LIKE MUSIC TO MY EARS HEARING YOU SAY THAT!
DON'T YOU GET IT, YOU BIG LUG? WE'RE REALLY BACK TOGETHER AGAIN!
WE'RE HOME!
HUH?
YA KNOW SOMETHIN', JUNIOR--YOU GOT A POINT THERE!
LISSEN--THERE'S A BREW 'N' BURGER AROUND THE CORNER!
WHADDA YA SAY WE GO AN' CELEBRATE?!
GO THEY DO--

--AND, WITH THEIR DEPARTURE, THE STUDIO GROWS ...SILENT!
ABANDONED UPON THE FLOOR, A HEADLINE SCREAMS OUT ITS MESSAGE TO SIGHTLESS--
--AND LIFELESS STONE EYES,
DAILY BUGLE
STRANGE DISAPPEARANCES CONTINUE TO PLAGUE N.Y.C.
YET, THERE IS LIFE WITHIN THE ROOM, FOR, WHERE A CERTAIN STATUE HAD STOOD IMMOBILE UPON ITS PEDESTAL--
--A FURTIVE SHADOWED SHAPE NOW MOVES SILENTLY ACROSS THE SOUNDLESS STUDIO--
--TO THE WINDOW WHERE, AFTER STEALTHILY OPENING IT, THE CREATURE...SPEAKS!
AH, MY FAITHFUL ONES-- YOU ARE HERE!
GOOD! ALL IS IN READINESS THEN!
THE FANTASTIC FOUR MOCKED THE NEWSPAPER HEADLINES--
--WHICH, HAD THEY BOTHERED TO READ FURTHER INTO THEM--
--MIGHT HAVE SUGGESTED A MODUS OPERANDI SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR TO OUR FOES!
BUT THEY SUSPECT NOTHING... AND SO THE NIGHT--AND THE CITY-- ARE OURS!
TO DO WITH AS WE PLEASE!

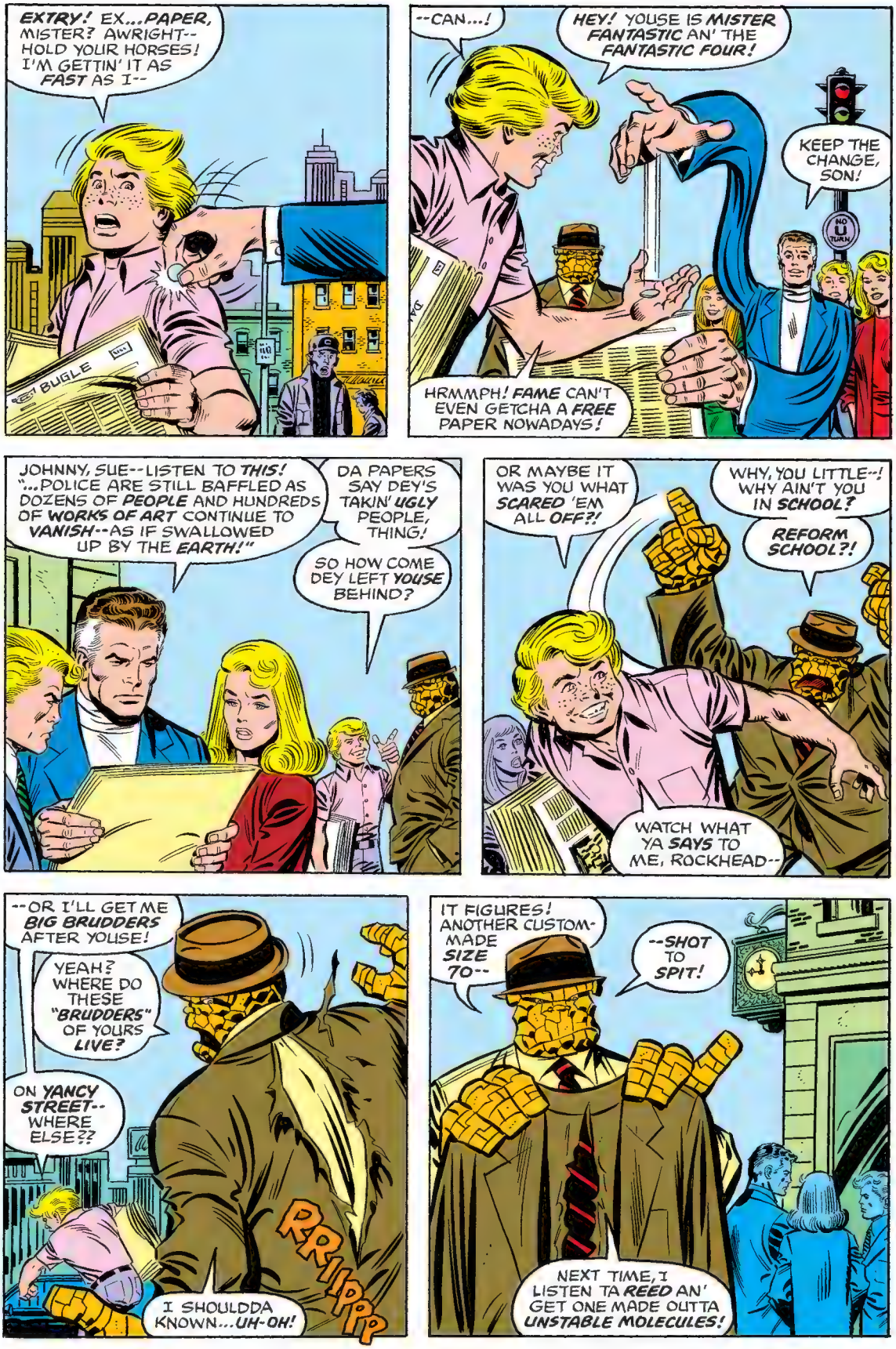
NOW, LET US BEGIN, MY CHILDREN! THERE IS MUCH TO BE DONE--
--BEFORE THE DAWN!
--QUICKLY SPREADING... IN NUMBERS APPARENTLY LIMITLESS...THROUGHOUT THE SURROUNDING BLOCKS!
THERE! OUR TARGET COMES--ON THE SAME SCHEDULE HE HAS FOLLOWED EVERY OTHER NIGHT!
NOW, MY CHILDREN--
--TAKE HIM!!
WH-WHAT'S HAPPENING?! I--I CAN'T SEE! STOP!
YIPE!
YIPE!
THE DOG HAS FLED ITS UNSEEING MASTER... SCARED OFF, NO DOUBT, BY OUR ALIEN ODOR!
BUT, COME! WE HAVE MORE TO DO THIS NIGHT!
AND...
THAT ONE, MY CHILDREN! CAN YOU NOT SENSE ITS NOBLE PRESENCE?!
SUCH MAGNIFICENT LINES, SUCH SUBTLE CARVING!
IT IS ALL YOU ARE NOT, ALL I COULD NEVER BE--
--AND NOW IT, TOO, IS MINE! CARRY IT OFF, CHILDREN--
--WHILE THE REST OF US MOVE ON TO OTHER CONQUESTS!
OTHER STATUES FOLLOW...ALL SYMBOLIZING BEAUTY, NOBILITY; ALL TACTILE MARVELS--ALL LIFTED FROM THEIR PEDESTALS AND CARRIED AWAY!

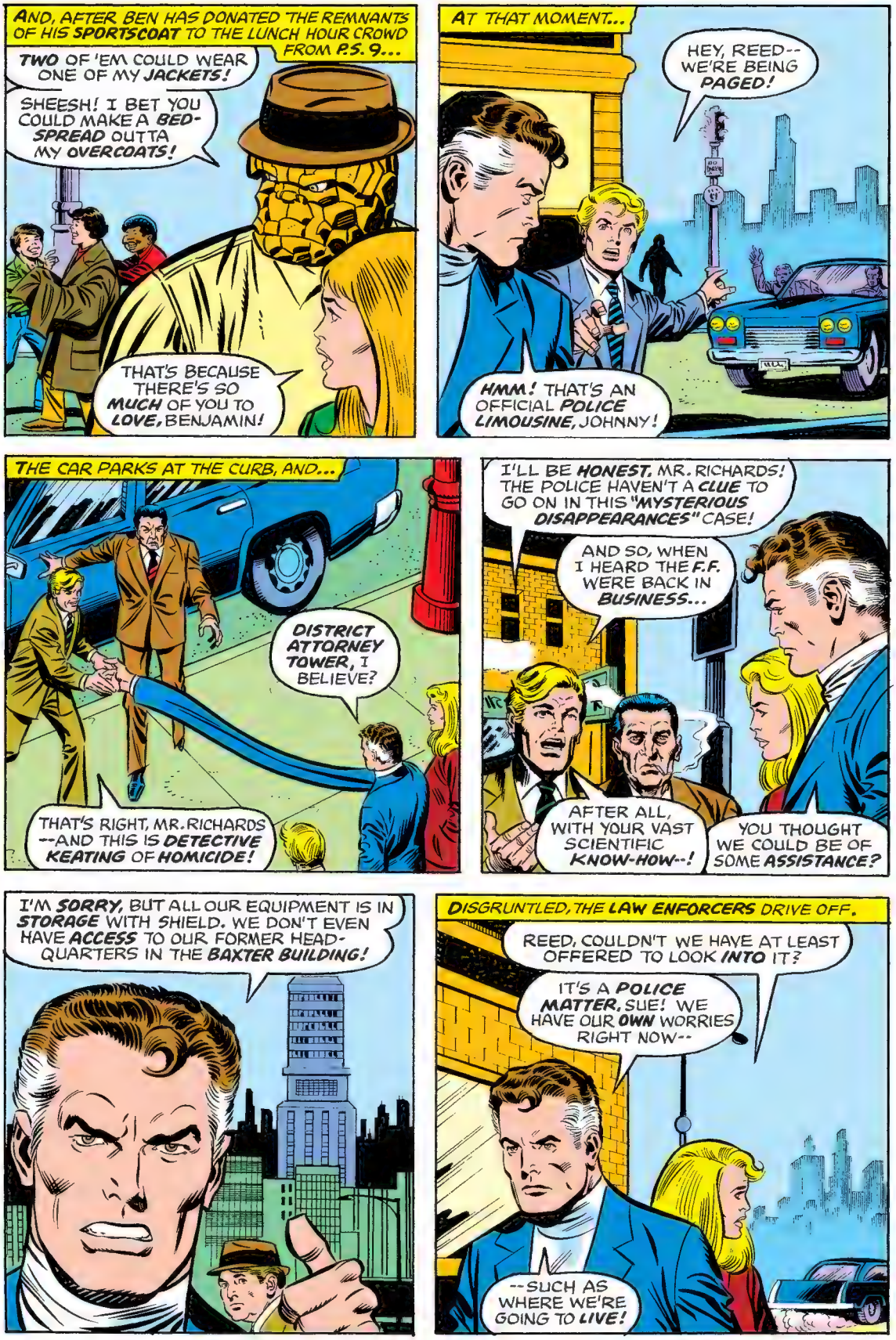

BUT THERE ARE OTHER TARGETS THIS NIGHT BESIDES THE BLIND AND THE BEAUTIFUL!
PINBALL 25¢
BIG TOP!
PING PING
TILT
SOME WILL BE TAKEN WHOM TOMORROW'S NEWS WILL REFER TO AS UGLY--
HEY!? WHAT THE--!?
--OR AS HOPELESS...DERELICTS DRIFTING FORLORNLY UPON THE SEA OF LIFE!
MOICIFUL HEAVENS--!!
NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN WHY SUCH AS THEY WOULD BE TARGETTED FOR KIDNAPPING!
BUT NOT ALL IN THE SLEEPING CITY ARE OBLIVIOUS TO THE NIGHT'S MARAUDINGS...
...MORE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES--
--CONTINUE TO BAFFLE POLICE! THE SITUATION HAS REACHED EPIDEMIC PROPORTIONS--WITH DOZENS VANISHING EVER HOUR!
AT FIRST I THOUGHT THIS STORY WAS JUST ANOTHER MEDIA SCARE--
--BUT NOW IT SOUNDS GRAVE ENOUGH FOR MATT MURDOCK TO DO SOME INVESTIGATING ON HIS OWN...
...AS DAREDEVIL!
OUR STORY MIGHT HAVE BEEN VASTLY CHANGED HAD A CERTAIN BLIND ATTORNEY REMAINED IN HIS APARTMENT A SCANT SECOND LONGER!
BUT HE DID NOT REMAIN...AND VACANT, UNCOMPREHENDING EYES--
--REGISTER ONLY THE FACT THAT THIS TARGET HAS ELUDED THEIR GRASP!

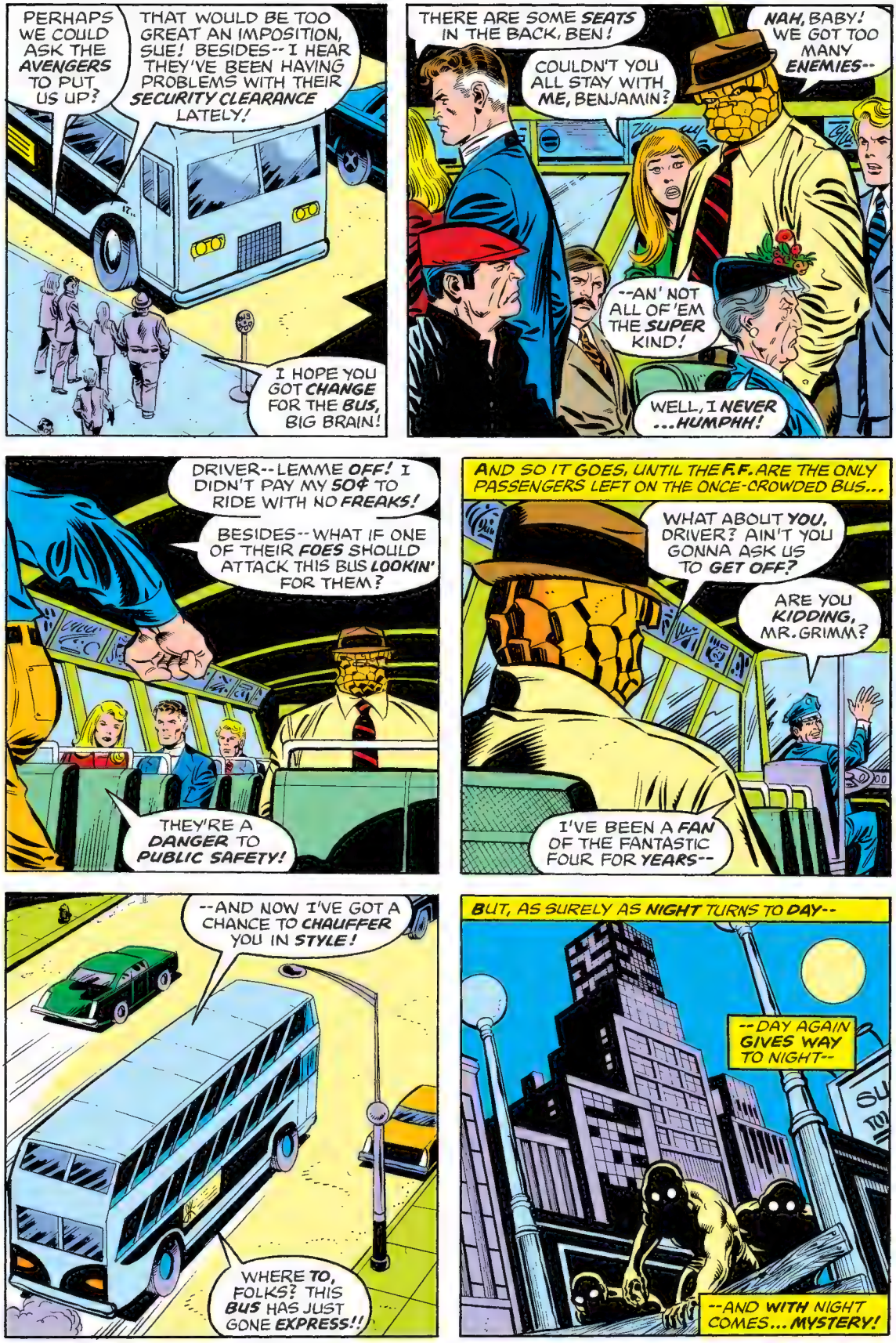

AND SO IT GOES THROUGHOUT THE LONG NIGHT!
HURRY, MY CHILDREN! DAWN IS ALMOST UPON US!
WE MUST BE OFF WITH OUR SPOILS--TO BEGIN ANEW WHEN DARKNESS FALLS AGAIN!
Sun!

CHAPTER 2 ENCOUNTER!

EXTRY! EXTRY! READ ALL ABOUT IT! DOZENS KIDNAPPED! STATUES SNATCHED ALL OVER DA BIG APPLE! EXTRY!
DAILY BUGLE
DOZENS VANISH IN NEW WAVE OF DISAPPEARANCES
STATUES STOLEN THROUGH-OUT CITY--POLICE BAFFLED
METS WIN
DAILY BUGLE
I'LL TAKE ONE, SON...OH, HE CAN'T HEAR ME FROM HERE!
CHECK OUT THE REAL ESTATE SECTION T' SEE IF WE CAN GET THE BAXTER BUILDIN' BACK!
OR IF NOT-- CHECK THE HELP WANTED ADS!


EXTRY! EX...PAPER, MISTER? AWRIGHT--HOLD YOUR HORSES! I'M GETTIN' IT AS FAST AS I--
BUGLE
--CAN...!
HEY! YOUSE IS MISTER FANTASTIC AN' THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
KEEP THE CHANGE, SON!
NO U TURN
HRMMPH! FAME CAN'T EVEN GETCHA A FREE PAPER NOWADAYS!
JOHNNY, SUE--LISTEN TO THIS! "...POLICE ARE STILL BAFFLED AS DOZENS OF PEOPLE AND HUNDREDS OF WORKS OF ART CONTINUE TO VANISH--AS IF SWALLOWED UP BY THE EARTH!"
DA PAPERS SAY DEY'S TAKIN' UGLY PEOPLE, THING!
SO HOW COME DEY LEFT YOUSE BEHIND?
OR MAYBE IT WAS YOU WHAT SCARED 'EM ALL OFF?!
WHY, YOU LITTLE--! WHY AIN'T YOU IN SCHOOL?
REFORM SCHOOL?!
WATCH WHAT YA SAYS TO ME, ROCKHEAD--
--OR I'LL GET ME BIG BRUDDERS AFTER YOUSE!
YEAH? WHERE DO THESE "BRUDDERS" OF YOURS LIVE?
ON YANCY STREET--WHERE ELSE??
RRIPPP
I SHOULDDA KNOWN...UH-OH!
IT FIGURES! ANOTHER CUSTOM-MADE SIZE 70--
--SHOT TO SPIT!
NEXT TIME, I LISTEN TA REED AN' GET ONE MADE OUTTA UNSTABLE MOLECULES!


AND, AFTER BEN HAS DONATED THE REMNANTS OF HIS SPORTSCOAT TO THE LUNCH HOUR CROWD FROM P.S. 9...
TWO OF 'EM COULD WEAR ONE OF MY JACKETS!
SHEESH! I BET YOU COULD MAKE A BED-SPREAD OUTTA MY OVERCOATS!
THAT'S BECAUSE THERE'S SO MUCH OF YOU TO LOVE, BENJAMIN!
AT THAT MOMENT...
HEY, REED-- WE'RE BEING PAGED!
HMM! THAT'S AN OFFICIAL POLICE LIMOUSINE, JOHNNY!
THE CAR PARKS AT THE CURB, AND...
DISTRICT ATTORNEY TOWER, I BELIEVE?
THAT'S RIGHT, MR. RICHARDS --AND THIS IS DETECTIVE KEATING OF HOMICIDE!
I'LL BE HONEST, MR. RICHARDS! THE POLICE HAVEN'T A CLUE TO GO ON IN THIS "MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES" CASE!
AND SO, WHEN I HEARD THE F.F. WERE BACK IN BUSINESS...
AFTER ALL, WITH YOUR VAST SCIENTIFIC KNOW-HOW--!
YOU THOUGHT WE COULD BE OF SOME ASSISTANCE?
I'M SORRY, BUT ALL OUR EQUIPMENT IS IN STORAGE WITH SHIELD. WE DON'T EVEN HAVE ACCESS TO OUR FORMER HEAD-QUARTERS IN THE BAXTER BUILDING!
DISGRUNTLED, THE LAW ENFORCERS DRIVE OFF.
REED, COULDN'T WE HAVE AT LEAST OFFERED TO LOOK INTO IT?
IT'S A POLICE MATTER, SUE! WE HAVE OUR OWN WORRIES RIGHT NOW--
--SUCH AS WHERE WE'RE GOING TO LIVE!

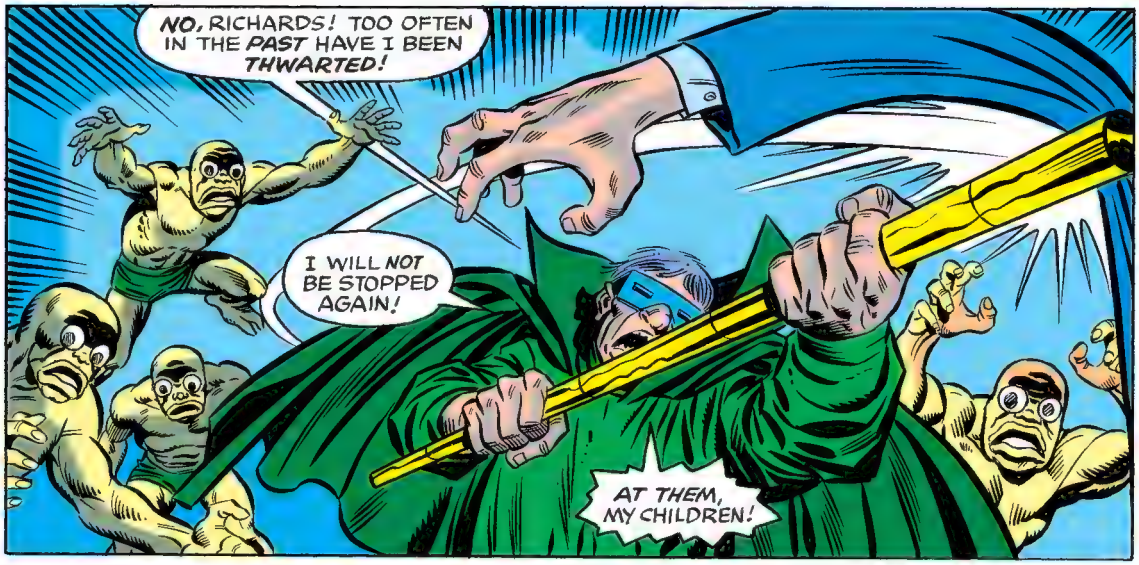

PERHAPS WE COULD ASK THE AVENGERS TO PUT US UP?
THAT WOULD BE TOO GREAT AN IMPOSITION, SUE! BESIDES--I HEAR THEY'VE BEEN HAVING PROBLEMS WITH THEIR SECURITY CLEARANCE LATELY!
I HOPE YOU GOT CHANGE FOR THE BUS, BIG BRAIN!
THERE ARE SOME SEATS IN THE BACK, BEN!
COULDN'T YOU ALL STAY WITH ME, BENJAMIN?
NAH, BABY! WE GOT TOO MANY ENEMIES--
--AN' NOT ALL OF 'EM THE SUPER KIND!
WELL, I NEVER ...HUMPHH!
DRIVER--LEMME OFF! I DIDN'T PAY MY 50¢ TO RIDE WITH NO FREAKS!
BESIDES--WHAT IF ONE OF THEIR FOES SHOULD ATTACK THIS BUS LOOKIN' FOR THEM?
THEY'RE A DANGER TO PUBLIC SAFETY!
AND SO IT GOES, UNTIL THE F.F. ARE THE ONLY PASSENGERS LEFT ON THE ONCE-CROWDED BUS...
WHAT ABOUT YOU, DRIVER? AIN'T YOU GONNA ASK US TO GET OFF?
ARE YOU KIDDING, MR. GRIMM?
I'VE BEEN A FAN OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR FOR YEARS--
--AND NOW I'VE GOT A CHANCE TO CHAUFFER YOU IN STYLE!
WHERE TO, FOLKS? THIS BUS HAS JUST GONE EXPRESS!!
BUT, AS SURELY AS NIGHT TURNS TO DAY--
--DAY AGAIN GIVES WAY TO NIGHT--
--AND WITH NIGHT COMES... MYSTERY!

GO FORTH, MY CHILDREN! TONIGHT IS OUR GREATEST--
--AND FINAL RAID!
MOVING LIKE SHADOWS WITHIN SHADOWS, THE SILENT SHAPES CARRY OUT THEIR MASTER'S STRIDENT COMMANDS--
--FORMING A LIVING LADDER UP THE SIDE OF A CERTAIN APARTMENT BUILDING!
AND, CLIMBING FROM BACK TO UNFEELING BACK--
--TOWARDS A WINDOW HE HAD OPENED FROM WITHIN THE NIGHT BEFORE!

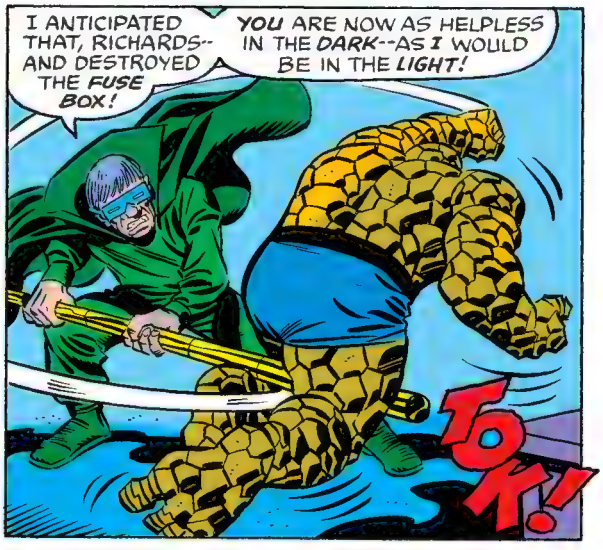
EXCELLENT! YOUR REPORTS ARE CONFIRMED, MY SILENT ONES!
THEY HAVE NOT YET RETURNED!
BUT RETURN THEY MAY AT ANY SECOND! WE MUST ACCOMPLISH OUR TASK SWIFTLY--
--TAKING THESE PRECIOUS OBJECTS TO WHERE THEY WILL BE MORE FULLY APPRECIATED--
--AND THEN DEPART BEFORE WE ARE DISCOVERED!
QUICKLY, MY CHILDREN! TAKE IT-- TAKE IT ALL!
BUT, AT JUST THAT MOMENT...
I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT! WE GOT ALL THE WAY TO RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL ONLY TO FIND IT'S BEEN SOLD OUT!
WITH A LINE AROUND THE BLOCK FOR THE NEXT SHOW!
GOT YER KEY, ALICIA?
YES, BEN, BUT I-- I WAS HESITATING BECAUSE... DARLING, DID YOU HEAR ANY-THING ODD JUST NOW?
ONLY THE BEATIN' OF MY HEART WHEN I'M NEAR YA, BABY--
--AN' THAT AIN'T EXACTLY WHAT YA'D CALL ODD!

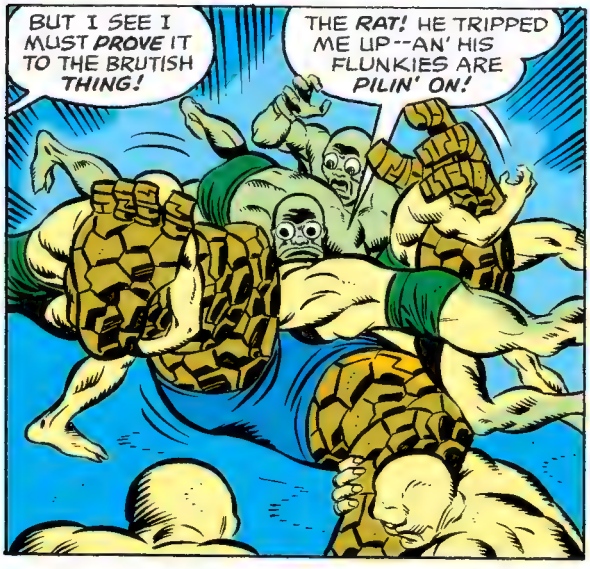
BUT THAT WASN'T THE SOUND THAT ALICIA MASTERS HEARD!
BE CAREFUL, YOU FOOL!
SKRAPE
KRASH!
I TAKE IT BACK, BABY! YA DID HEAR SOMETHIN'--
--AN' IT AIN'T MICE!
BEN! DON'T GO BARGING IN...!
SAVE IT, STRETCH! THIS IS WHAT WE WUZ AFRAID OF, AIN'T IT--SOMEBODY MESSIN' WITH ALICIA'S PRIVACY?!
WELL, I AIN'T TAKIN' IT SITTIN' DOWN! THIS IS MY BABY'S PLACE, AN'--!
BRATROOM!
HOLY JOE! IT'S--

CHAPTER 3
CONFRONTATION!
--THE MOLE MAN!
AND HIS SUBTERRANEANS! REED, THEY'RE--
--STEALING ALICIA'S STATUES... JUST LIKE THOSE MENTIONED IN THE NEWSPAPERS!
YES, SUE! I THINK THE "MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES" CASE HAS JUST SOLVED ITSELF!
HOLD IT, MISTER!!

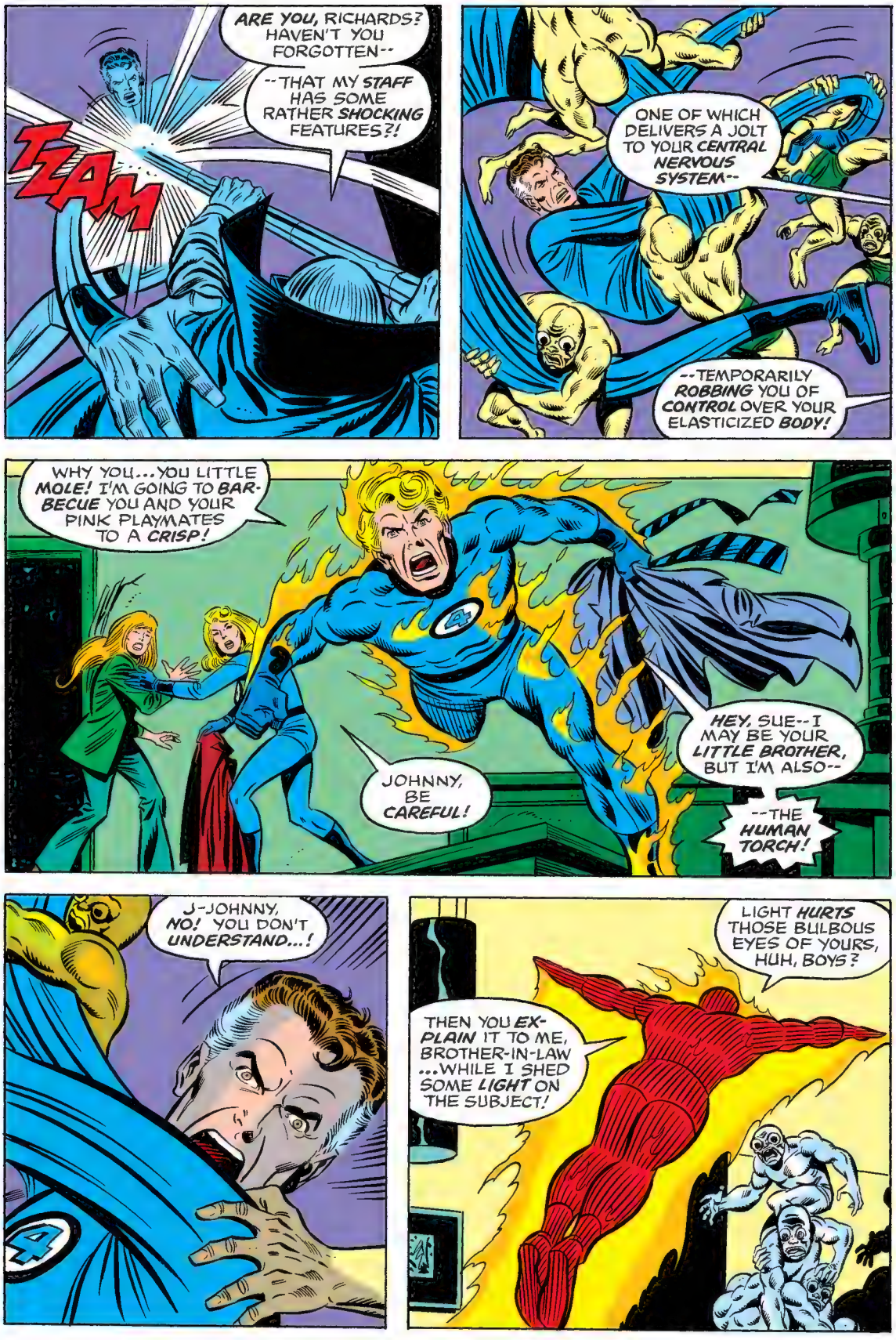

NO, RICHARDS! TOO OFTEN IN THE PAST HAVE I BEEN THWARTED!
I WILL NOT BE STOPPED AGAIN!
AT THEM, MY CHILDREN!

YEAH--COME ON, YA PINK PUNCHIN' BAGS! I'M WAITIN' FOR YA!
SUE--GET ALICIA TO SAFETY... AND TRY TO FIND THE LIGHT SWITCH!

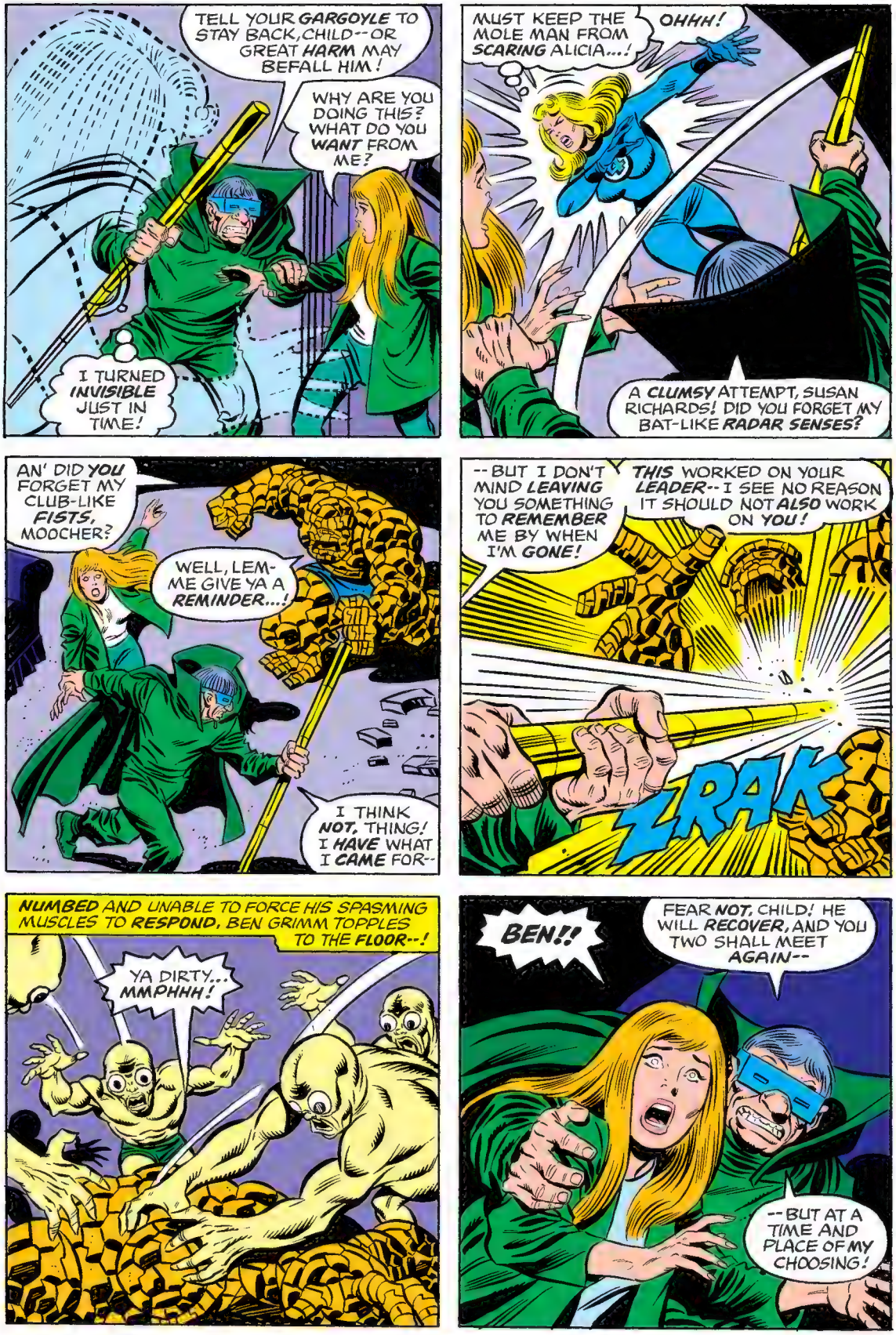

I ANTICIPATED THAT, RICHARDS--AND DESTROYED THE FUSE BOX!
YOU ARE NOW AS HELPLESS IN THE DARK--AS I WOULD BE IN THE LIGHT!
TOK!

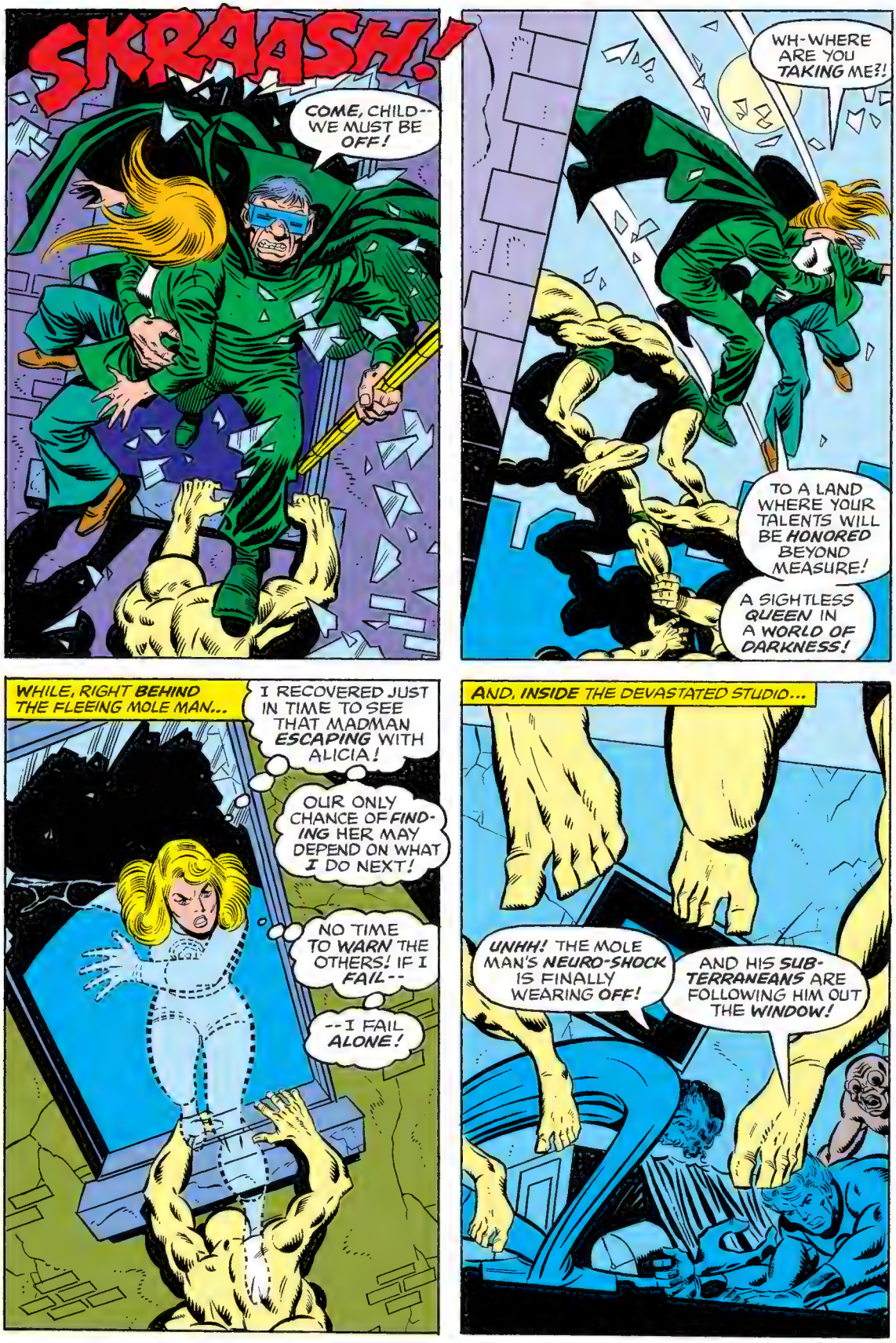

BUT I SEE I MUST PROVE IT TO THE BRUTISH THING!
THE RAT! HE TRIPPED ME UP--AN' HIS FLUNKIES ARE PILIN' ON!

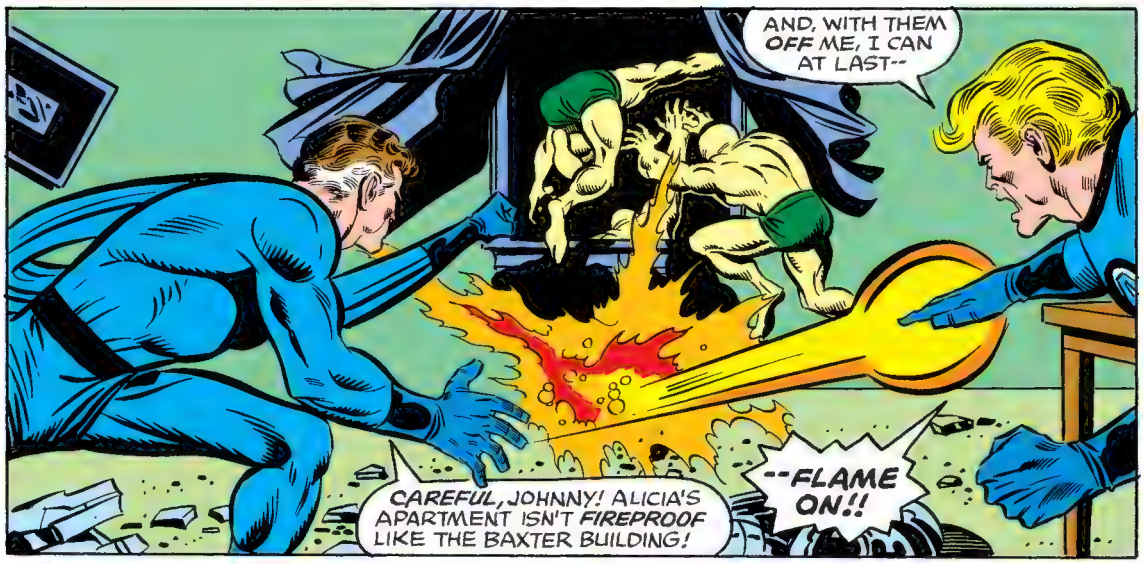
HANG ON, BEN! I'M COMING!

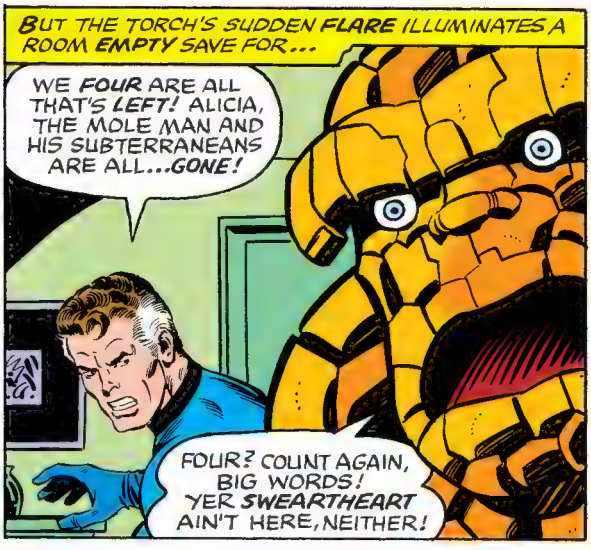

ARE YOU, RICHARDS? HAVEN'T YOU FORGOTTEN--
--THAT MY STAFF HAS SOME RATHER SHOCKING FEATURES?!
TZAM
ONE OF WHICH DELIVERS A JOLT TO YOUR CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM--
--TEMPORARILY ROBBING YOU OF CONTROL OVER YOUR ELASTICIZED BODY!
WHY YOU...YOU LITTLE MOLE! I'M GOING TO BARBECUE YOU AND YOUR PINK PLAYMATES TO A CRISP!
JOHNNY, BE CAREFUL!
HEY, SUE--I MAY BE YOUR LITTLE BROTHER, BUT I'M ALSO--
--THE HUMAN TORCH!
J-JOHNNY, NO! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...!
LIGHT HURTS THOSE BULBOUS EYES OF YOURS, HUH, BOYS?
THEN YOU EXPLAIN IT TO ME, BROTHER-IN-LAW ...WHILE I SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT!

H-HEY! THEY-- THEY'RE NOT EVEN BLINKING!
AND THEY'RE LEAPING UP AT ME AS IF UNAFRAID OF MY FLAME!
N-NOW THEY'RE DRAGGING ME DOWN TO... UNGHHH!
KROM
YES, YOU FLAMING FOOL! THIS TIME, I HAVE TREATED MY SUBTERRANEANS WITH A CHEMICAL--
--THAT ALLOWS THEM TO RESIST YOUR FLAME... LONG ENOUGH TO SNUFF IT OUT!
NOW WE MAY OBTAIN HER WHOM WE CAME FOR!
WH-WHAT'S HAPPENING? BEN-- WHERE ARE YOU?!
HAVE NO FEAR, CHILD--YOU WILL NOT BE HARMED ...IF YOU COME ALONG QUIETLY!
ALICIA!
GET OFF ME, YA WALKIN' KNEADED ERASERS!
MY BABY NEEDS ME!

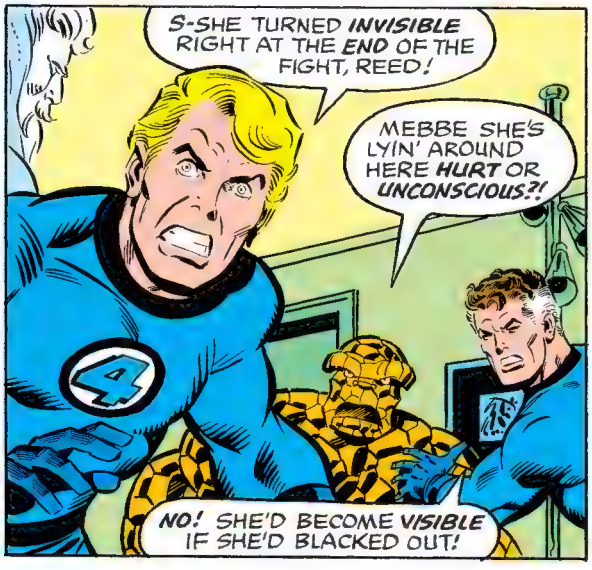

TELL YOUR GARGOYLE TO STAY BACK, CHILD--OR GREAT HARM MAY BEFALL HIM!
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
I TURNED INVISIBLE JUST IN TIME!
MUST KEEP THE MOLE MAN FROM SCARING ALICIA...!
OHHH!
A CLUMSY ATTEMPT, SUSAN RICHARDS! DID YOU FORGET MY BAT-LIKE RADAR SENSES?
AN' DID YOU FORGET MY CLUB-LIKE FISTS, MOOCHER?
WELL, LEM-ME GIVE YA A REMINDER...!
I THINK NOT, THING! I HAVE WHAT I CAME FOR--
--BUT I DON'T MIND LEAVING YOU SOMETHING TO REMEMBER ME BY WHEN I'M GONE!
THIS WORKED ON YOUR LEADER--I SEE NO REASON IT SHOULD NOT ALSO WORK ON YOU!
ZRAK
NUMBED AND UNABLE TO FORCE HIS SPASMING MUSCLES TO RESPOND, BEN GRIMM TOPPLES TO THE FLOOR--!
YA DIRTY... MMPHHH!
BEN!!
FEAR NOT, CHILD! HE WILL RECOVER, AND YOU TWO SHALL MEET AGAIN--
--BUT AT A TIME AND PLACE OF MY CHOOSING!


SKRAASH!
COME, CHILD-- WE MUST BE OFF!
WH-WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?!
TO A LAND WHERE YOUR TALENTS WILL BE HONORED BEYOND MEASURE!
A SIGHTLESS QUEEN IN A WORLD OF DARKNESS!
WHILE, RIGHT BEHIND THE FLEEING MOLE MAN...
I RECOVERED JUST IN TIME TO SEE THAT MADMAN ESCAPING WITH ALICIA!
OUR ONLY CHANCE OF FINDING HER MAY DEPEND ON WHAT I DO NEXT!
NO TIME TO WARN THE OTHERS! IF I FAIL--
--I FAIL ALONE!
AND, INSIDE THE DEVASTATED STUDIO...
UNHH! THE MOLE MAN'S NEURO-SHOCK IS FINALLY WEARING OFF!
AND HIS SUB-TERRANEANS ARE FOLLOWING HIM OUT THE WINDOW!

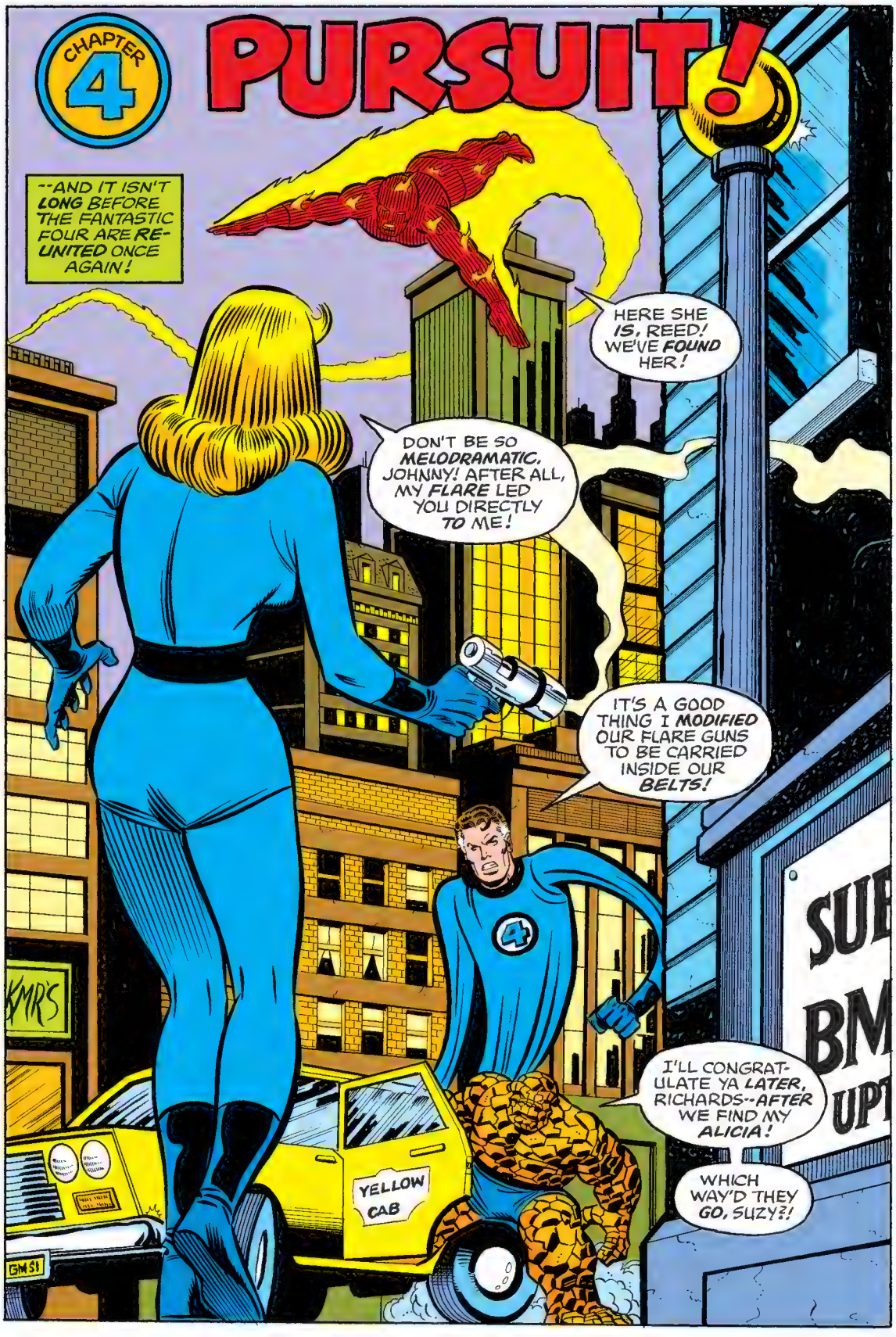

AND, WITH THEM OFF ME, I CAN AT LAST--
CAREFUL, JOHNNY! ALICIA'S APARTMENT ISN'T FIREPROOF LIKE THE BAXTER BUILDING!
--FLAME ON!!

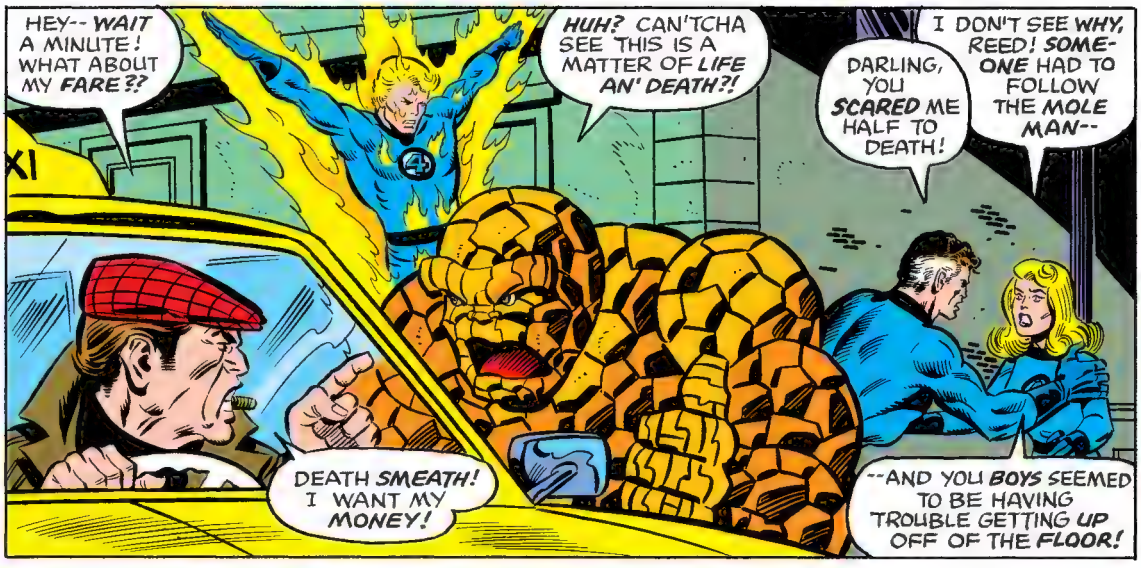

BUT THE TORCH'S SUDDEN FLARE ILLUMINATES A ROOM EMPTY SAVE FOR...
WE FOUR ARE ALL THAT'S LEFT! ALICIA, THE MOLE MAN AND HIS SUBTERRANEANS ARE ALL...GONE!
FOUR? COUNT AGAIN, BIG WORDS! YER SWEARTHEART AIN'T HERE, NEITHER!

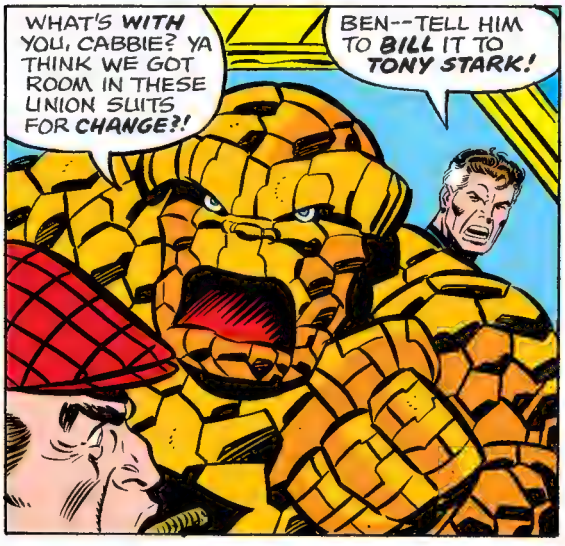
OH, MY GOD-- SUE!?


S-SHE TURNED INVISIBLE RIGHT AT THE END OF THE FIGHT, REED!
MEBBE SHE'S LYIN' AROUND HERE HURT OR UNCONSCIOUS?!
NO! SHE'D BECOME VISIBLE IF SHE'D BLACKED OUT!

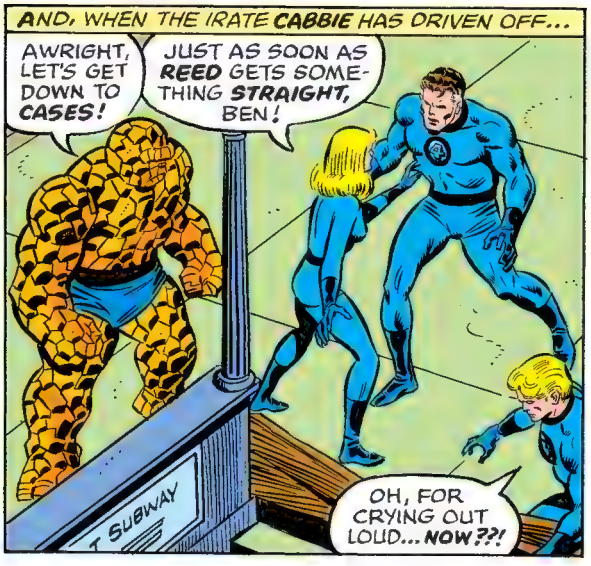
THERE'S ONLY ONE ANSWER! SHE MUST HAVE GONE AFTER THE MOLE MAN HERSELF! WE...
LOOK-- IN THE SKY!!
IT LIGHTS UP THE HEAVENS, A GUIDING BEACON--


CHAPTER 4
PURSUIT!
--AND IT ISN'T LONG BEFORE THE FANTASTIC FOUR ARE RE-UNITED ONCE AGAIN!
HERE SHE IS, REED! WE'VE FOUND HER!
DON'T BE SO MELODRAMATIC, JOHNNY! AFTER ALL, MY FLARE LED YOU DIRECTLY TO ME!
IT'S A GOOD THING I MODIFIED OUR FLARE GUNS TO BE CARRIED INSIDE OUR BELTS!
I'LL CONGRATULATE YA LATER, RICHARDS--AFTER WE FIND MY ALICIA!
WHICH WAY'D THEY GO, SUZY?!
YELLOW CAB
KMRS
GM SI

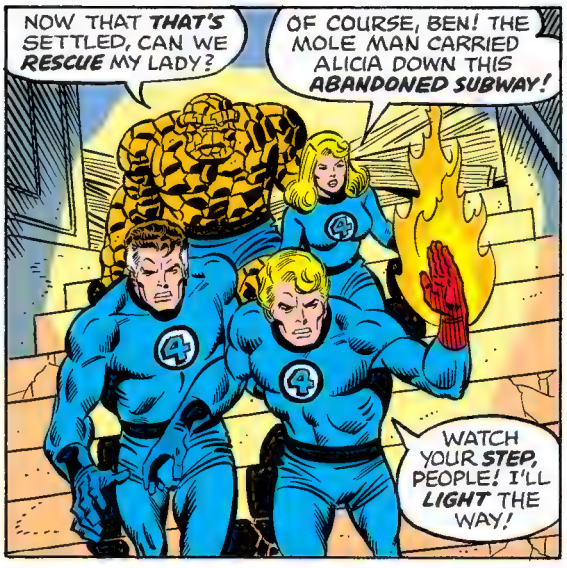

HEY-- WAIT A MINUTE! WHAT ABOUT MY FARE??
HUH? CAN'TCHA SEE THIS IS A MATTER OF LIFE AN' DEATH?!
DARLING, YOU SCARED ME HALF TO DEATH!
I DON'T SEE WHY, REED! SOMEONE HAD TO FOLLOW THE MOLE MAN--
DEATH SMEATH! I WANT MY MONEY!
--AND YOU BOYS SEEMED TO BE HAVING TROUBLE GETTING UP OFF OF THE FLOOR!


WHAT'S WITH YOU, CABBIE? YA THINK WE GOT ROOM IN THESE UNION SUITS FOR CHANGE?!
BEN--TELL HIM TO BILL IT TO TONY STARK!

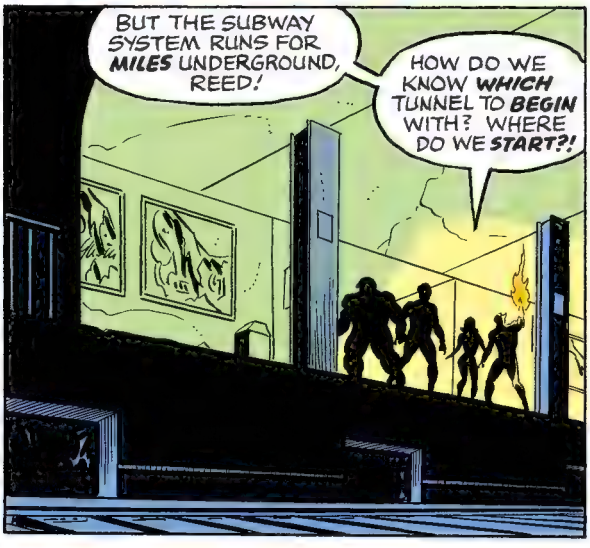
YEAH, AN' I CAN IMAGINE THE TIME I'M GONNA HAVE COLLECTIN'! GO ON, YA CHISELERS!
I HOPE WHOEVER YER FIGHTIN' CREAMS YA!
YOU DIDN'T GROW UP ON YANCY STREET, DID YA?
YEAH! HOW'D YA KNOW?!
JUST A HUNCH!


AND, WHEN THE IRATE CABBIE HAS DRIVEN OFF...
AWRIGHT, LET'S GET DOWN TO CASES!
JUST AS SOON AS REED GETS SOMETHING STRAIGHT, BEN!
SUBWAY
OH, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD... NOW??!

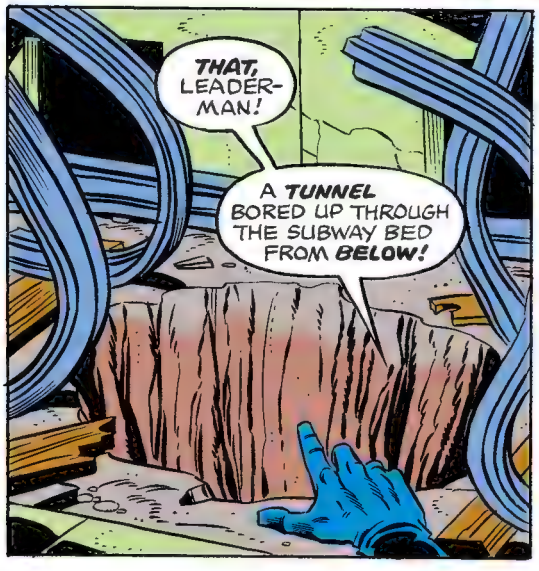
YES--NOW! I MAY BE YOUR WIFE AND THE MOTHER OF OUR CHILD... BUT I'M STILL ONE FOURTH OF THIS TEAM! I TAKE THE CHANCE WE ALL TAKE! IS THAT UNDERSTOOD, HUSBAND-MINE?
SUE, IT'S JUST THAT I... OH, WHAT'S THE USE? YES--IT'S UNDERSTOOD!

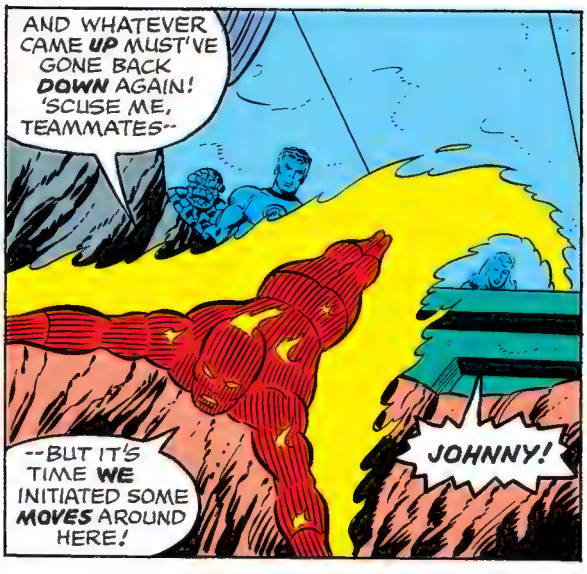

NOW THAT THAT'S SETTLED, CAN WE RESCUE MY LADY?
OF COURSE, BEN! THE MOLE MAN CARRIED ALICIA DOWN THIS ABANDONED SUBWAY!
WATCH YOUR STEP, PEOPLE! I'LL LIGHT THE WAY!

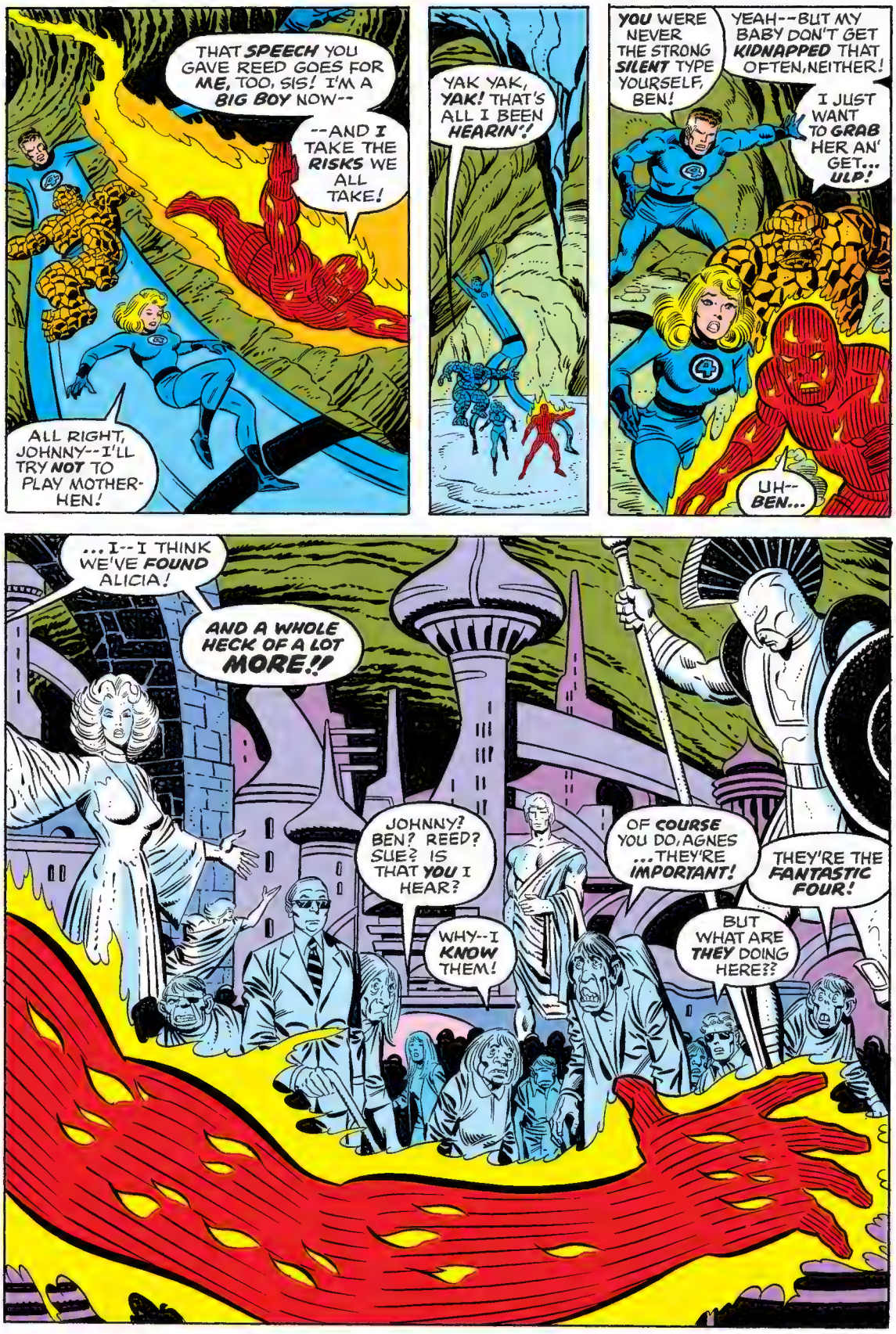
THEY MUSTA SHUT THIS GATE BEHIND THEM T' KEEP THE TRANSIT AUTHORITY FROM GETTIN' SUSPICIOUS!
SKRUNCH!
A PERFECT HIDING PLACE!

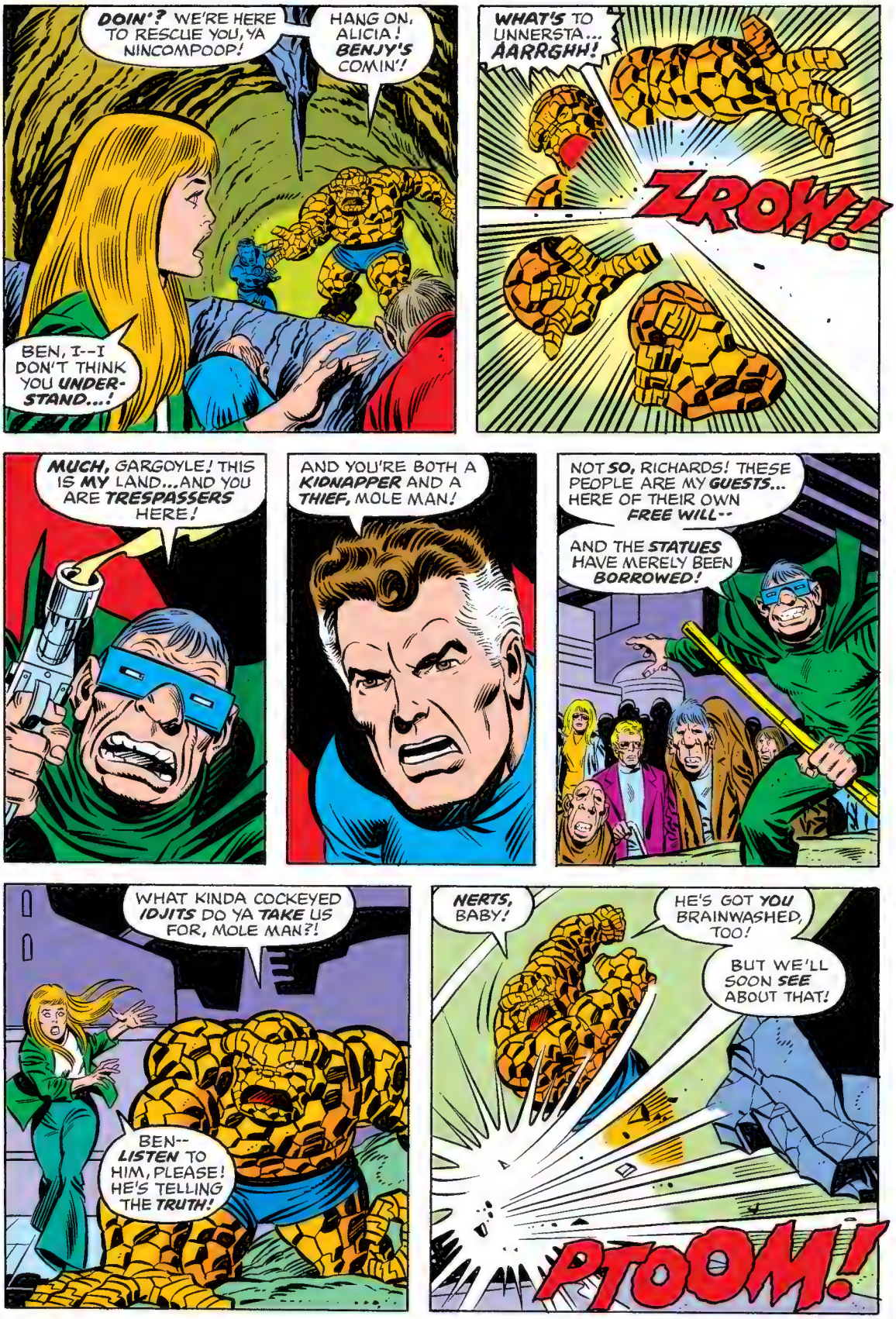

BUT THE SUBWAY SYSTEM RUNS FOR MILES UNDERGROUND, REED!
HOW DO WE KNOW WHICH TUNNEL TO BEGIN WITH? WHERE DO WE START?!

I DON'T THINK WE'LL HAVE MUCH DIFFICULTY THERE, SIS!
WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND, JOHNNY?


THAT, LEADER-MAN!
A TUNNEL BORED UP THROUGH THE SUBWAY BED FROM BELOW!

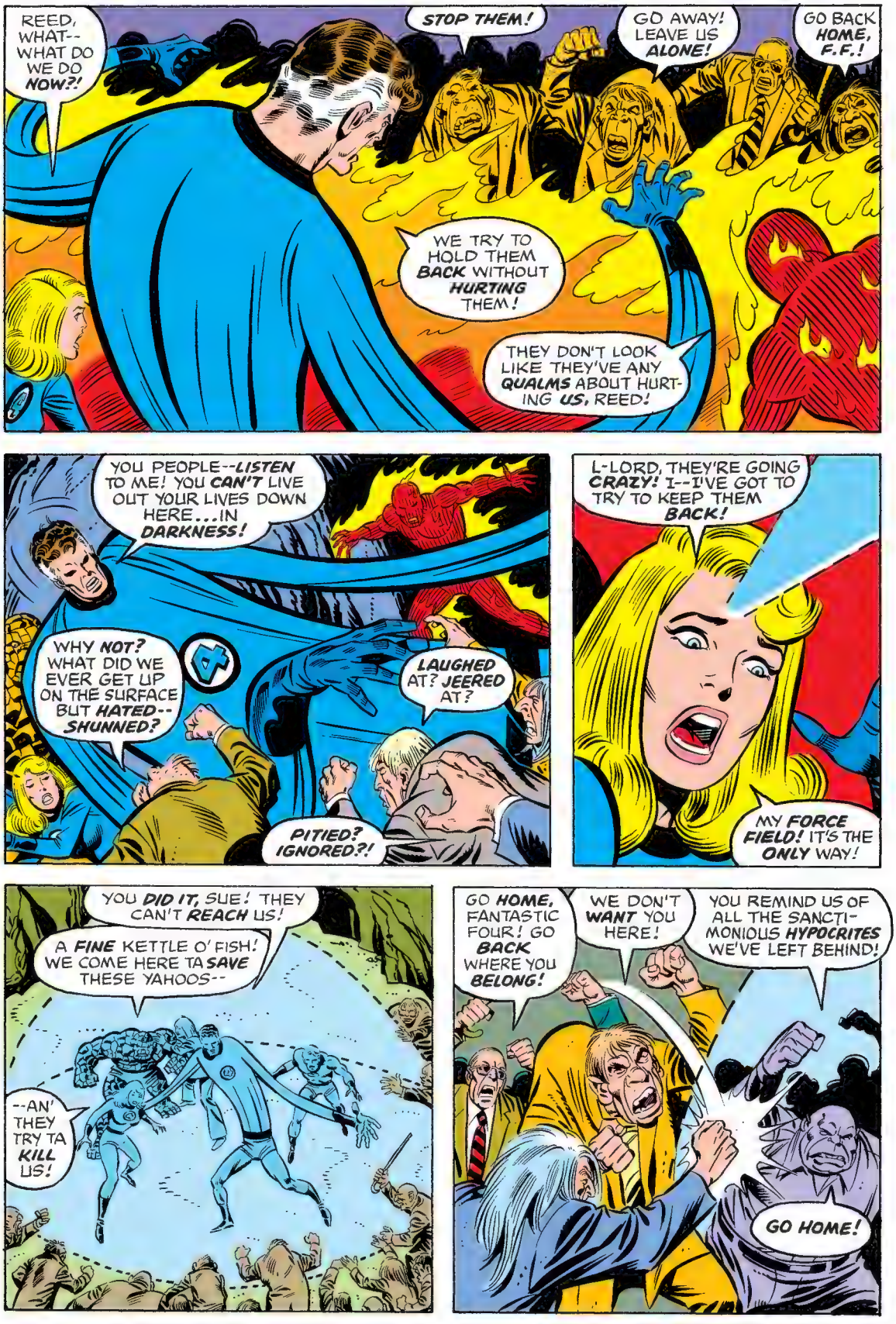

AND WHATEVER CAME UP MUST'VE GONE BACK DOWN AGAIN! 'SCUSE ME, TEAMMATES--
--BUT IT'S TIME WE INITIATED SOME MOVES AROUND HERE!
JOHNNY!


THAT SPEECH YOU GAVE REED GOES FOR ME, TOO, SIS! I'M A BIG BOY NOW--
--AND I TAKE THE RISKS WE ALL TAKE!
ALL RIGHT, JOHNNY--I'LL TRY NOT TO PLAY MOTHER-HEN!
YAK YAK, YAK! THAT'S ALL I BEEN HEARIN'!
YOU WERE NEVER THE STRONG SILENT TYPE YOURSELF, BEN!
YEAH--BUT MY BABY DON'T GET KIDNAPPED THAT OFTEN, NEITHER!
I JUST WANT TO GRAB HER AN' GET... ULP!
UH-- BEN...
...I--I THINK WE'VE FOUND ALICIA!
AND A WHOLE HECK OF A LOT MORE!!
JOHNNY? BEN? REED? SUE? IS THAT YOU I HEAR?
WHY--I KNOW THEM!
OF COURSE YOU DO, AGNES ...THEY'RE IMPORTANT!
THEY'RE THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
BUT WHAT ARE THEY DOING HERE??

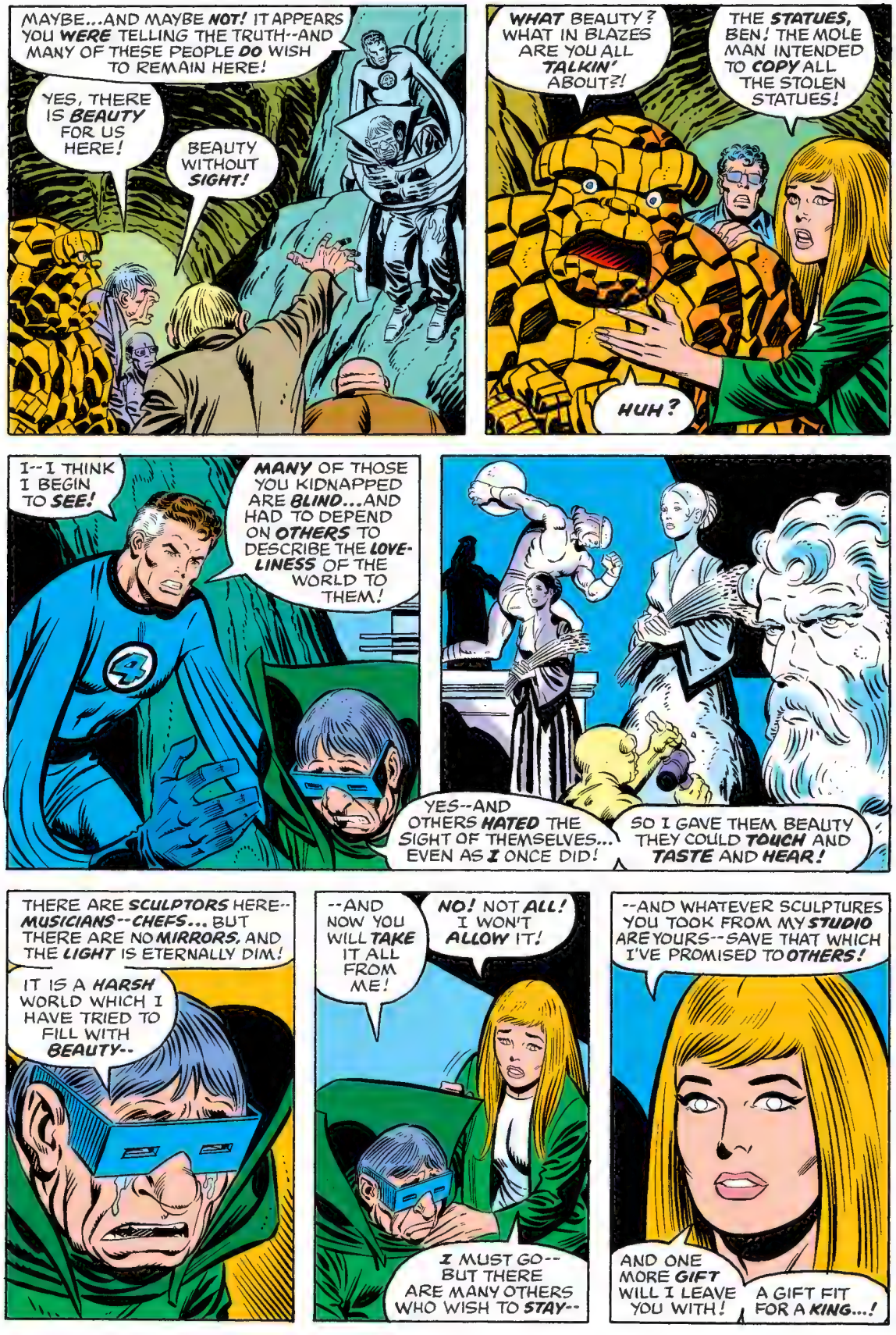

DOIN'? WE'RE HERE TO RESCUE YOU, YA NINCOMPOOP!
HANG ON, ALICIA! BENJY'S COMIN'!
BEN, I--I DON'T THINK YOU UNDER-STAND...!
WHAT'S TO UNNERSTA... AARRGHH!
ZROW!
MUCH, GARGOYLE! THIS IS MY LAND...AND YOU ARE TRESPASSERS HERE!
AND YOU'RE BOTH A KIDNAPPER AND A THIEF, MOLE MAN!
NOT SO, RICHARDS! THESE PEOPLE ARE MY GUESTS... HERE OF THEIR OWN FREE WILL--
AND THE STATUES HAVE MERELY BEEN BORROWED!
WHAT KINDA COCKEYED IDJITS DO YA TAKE US FOR, MOLE MAN?!
BEN-- LISTEN TO HIM, PLEASE! HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH!
NERTS, BABY!
HE'S GOT YOU BRAINWASHED, TOO!
BUT WE'LL SOON SEE ABOUT THAT!
PTOOM!

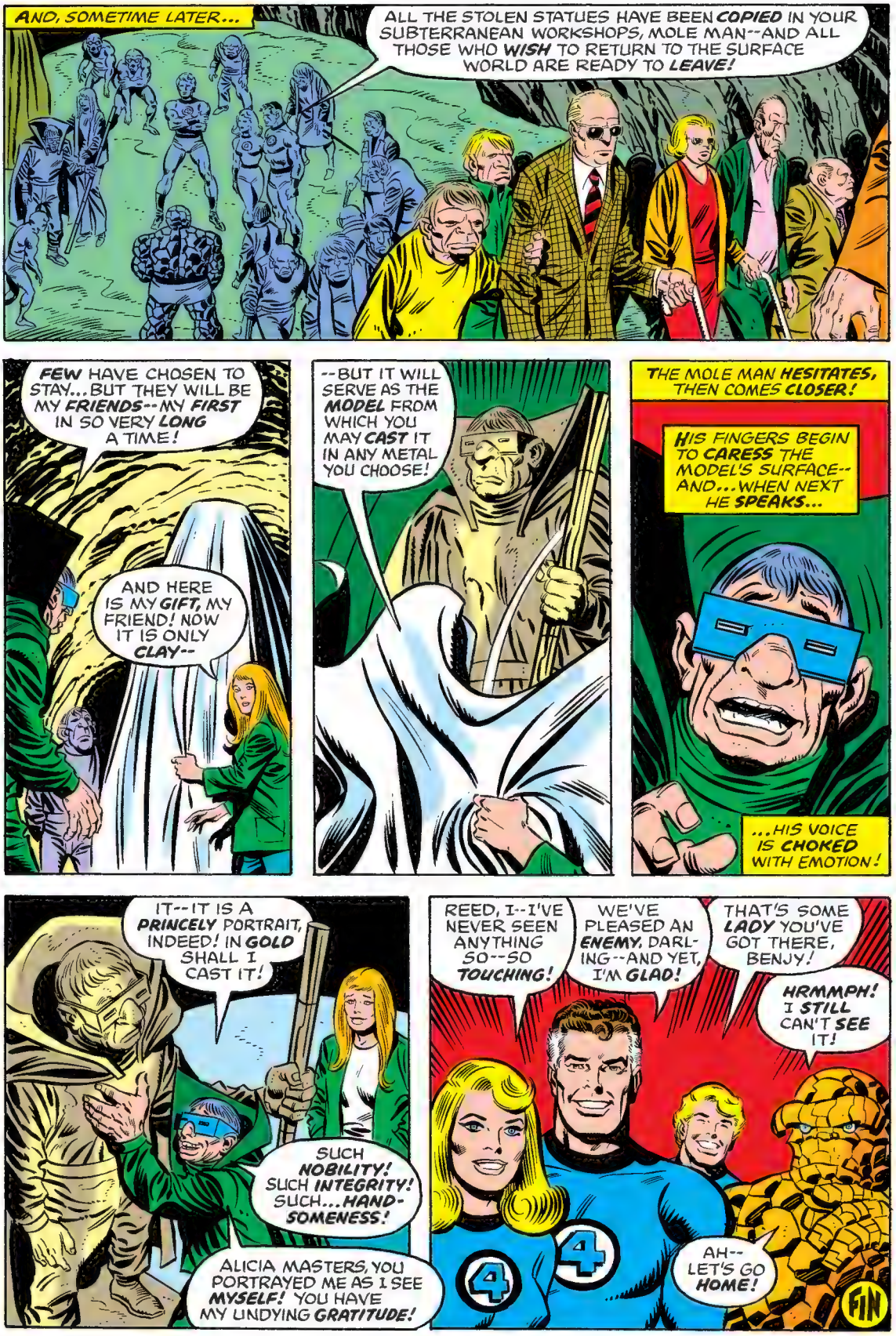
CHAPTER 5
BATTLE!
GO HOME! GO BACK TO YOUR PRECIOUS SUNLIT WORLD! THIS LAND IS MINE!
DEFY ME AND MY SUBTERRANEANS SHALL DESTROY YOU!
SEEMS I'VE HEARD THAT TUNE SOMEWHERE BEFORE, MOLEY!
DON'T GET COCKY, JOHNNY--IN WAR, EVEN THE GOOD GUYS SOMETIMES LOSE!
SHEESH! DIDJA LIFT THAT ONE FROM BARTLETT'S, STRETCH?!
LOOK OUT, BEN! HERE THEY COME!!

BEN! WATCH OUT FOR HIS STAFF!
TOO LATE, STRETCH! HE JUST POINTS THE BLASTED THING--
--AN' THE ROCKS TURN TA QUICK-SAND!
DON'T WORRY, OLD FRIEND! I'LL HAVE YOU OUT IN A-- AARHH!
YOU'LL HAVE ENOUGH TO DO TO SAVE YOURSELF, RICHARDS!
THAT GOES TWO WAYS, MOLE MAN! GET AWAY FROM REED--
--BEFORE I MAKE THAT PIGSTICKER OF YOURS TOO HOT TO HANDLE!
NO! IT CAN'T END THIS WAY! I WON'T LET IT! HELP ME, MY FRIENDS!
S-SUE-- LOOK!
I--I SEE IT, REED... BUT I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
OH, SUSAN, I TRIED TO TELL YOU--
--THAT THE PEOPLE THE MOLE MAN KIDNAPPED-- THE BLIND...THE UGLY ...THE OUTCAST--
--THEY'RE ON HIS SIDE NOW! HE GAVE THEM A WORLD WHERE THEY CAN BE ACCEPTED AS THEY ARE--
--AND THEY'LL KILL TO STAY HERE!
STOP THE FANTASTIC FOUR!
SAVE THE MOLE MAN!

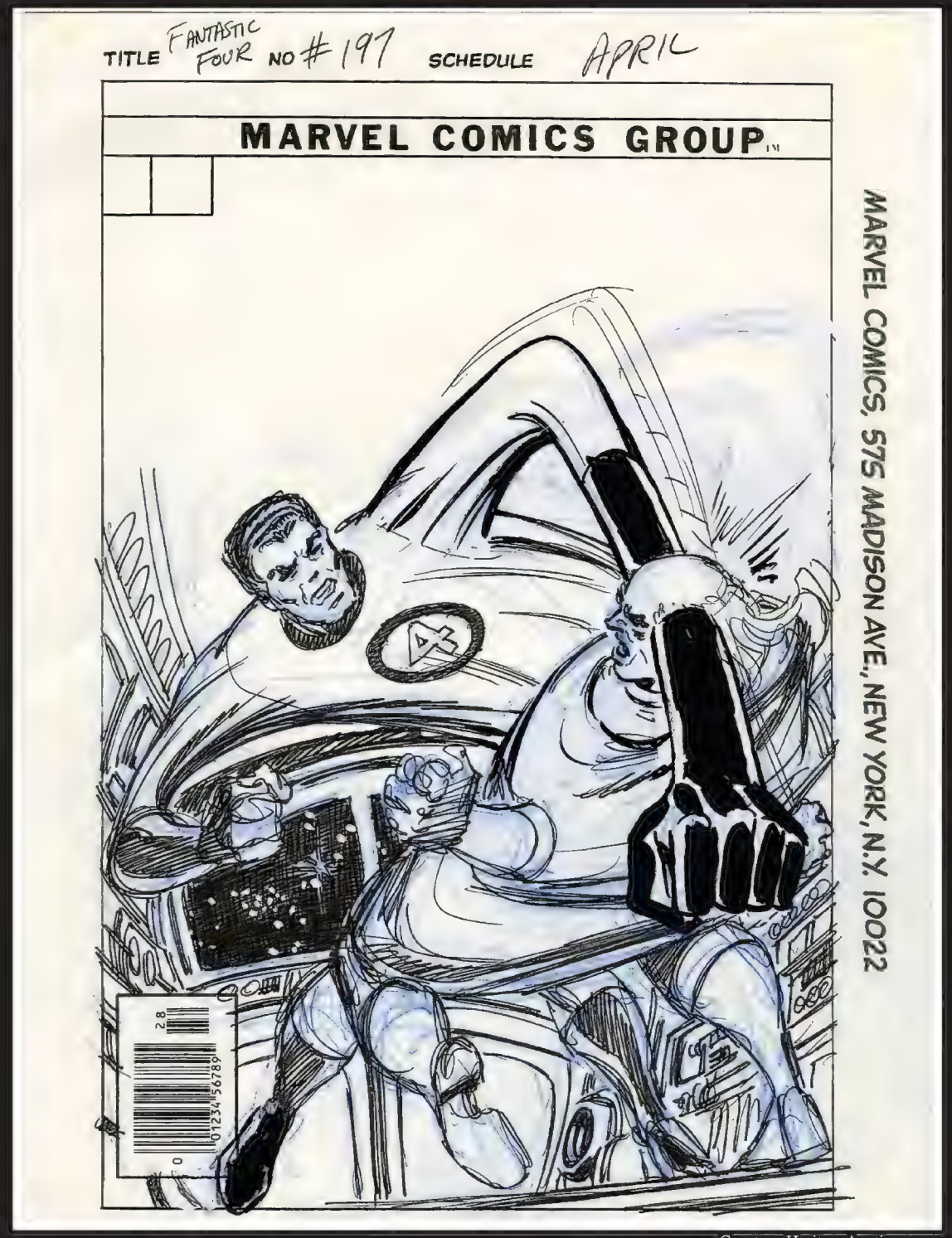

REED, WHAT-- WHAT DO WE DO NOW?!
STOP THEM!
GO AWAY! LEAVE US ALONE!
GO BACK HOME, F.F.!
WE TRY TO HOLD THEM BACK WITHOUT HURTING THEM!
THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE THEY'VE ANY QUALMS ABOUT HURTING US, REED!
YOU PEOPLE--LISTEN TO ME! YOU CAN'T LIVE OUT YOUR LIVES DOWN HERE...IN DARKNESS!
WHY NOT? WHAT DID WE EVER GET UP ON THE SURFACE BUT HATED-- SHUNNED?
LAUGHED AT? JEERED AT?
PITIED? IGNORED?!
L-LORD, THEY'RE GOING CRAZY! I--I'VE GOT TO TRY TO KEEP THEM BACK!
MY FORCE FIELD! IT'S THE ONLY WAY!
YOU DID IT, SUE! THEY CAN'T REACH US!
A FINE KETTLE O' FISH! WE COME HERE TA SAVE THESE YAHOOS--
--AN' THEY TRY TA KILL US!
GO HOME, FANTASTIC FOUR! GO BACK WHERE YOU BELONG!
WE DON'T WANT YOU HERE!
YOU REMIND US OF ALL THE SANCTIMONIOUS HYPOCRITES WE'VE LEFT BEHIND!
GO HOME!

THAT DOES IT! I'VE TAKEN ALL I'M GONNA TAKE! LET DOWN YER FORCE FIELD, SUZY!
WHOM
BENJY'S GOT HISSELF A NECK TA WRING!
BEN, STOP IT! EACH TIME YOU HIT THE FIELD YOU HURT SUE!
HE'S BEYOND REASON, REED!
O-OHH, REED... CAN'T MAINTAIN FIELD ANY LONGER!
AND...
WE CAN GET THROUGH TO THEM NOW! GET THEM! KILL THEM!
NO! HOLD THEM FOR THE MOLE MAN!
U-ULLPP!
AWRIGHT, SCHNOOK! I'M GONNA ASK YOU JUST ONE QUESTION BEFORE I CLOBBER YA!
WHAT'S WITH YOU, ANYWAY?
I-IT'S JUST LIKE WE SAID! HE GAVE US A WORLD WHERE WE DIDN'T HAVE TO LOOK AT OURSELVES...OR BE LOOKED AT BY OTHERS! WE'RE PEOPLE HERE--NOT FREAKS!
DON'T MAKE US GO BACK, MISTER--PLEASE?!
MOLE MAN--I WANT TO TALK WITH YOU...WITHOUT YOUR STAFF!
RICHARDS!
THEN--THEN I'VE LOST AGAIN?!


MAYBE...AND MAYBE NOT! IT APPEARS YOU WERE TELLING THE TRUTH--AND MANY OF THESE PEOPLE DO WISH TO REMAIN HERE!
YES, THERE IS BEAUTY FOR US HERE!
BEAUTY WITHOUT SIGHT!
WHAT BEAUTY? WHAT IN BLAZES ARE YOU ALL TALKIN' ABOUT?!
THE STATUES, BEN! THE MOLE MAN INTENDED TO COPY ALL THE STOLEN STATUES!
HUH?
I--I THINK I BEGIN TO SEE!
MANY OF THOSE YOU KIDNAPPED ARE BLIND...AND HAD TO DEPEND ON OTHERS TO DESCRIBE THE LOVELINESS OF THE WORLD TO THEM!
YES--AND OTHERS HATED THE SIGHT OF THEMSELVES... EVEN AS I ONCE DID!
SO I GAVE THEM BEAUTY THEY COULD TOUCH AND TASTE AND HEAR!
THERE ARE SCULPTORS HERE--MUSICIANS--CHEFS... BUT THERE ARE NO MIRRORS, AND THE LIGHT IS ETERNALLY DIM!
IT IS A HARSH WORLD WHICH I HAVE TRIED TO FILL WITH BEAUTY--
--AND NOW YOU WILL TAKE IT ALL FROM ME!
NO! NOT ALL! I WON'T ALLOW IT!
I MUST GO-- BUT THERE ARE MANY OTHERS WHO WISH TO STAY--
--AND WHATEVER SCULPTURES YOU TOOK FROM MY STUDIO ARE YOURS--SAVE THAT WHICH I'VE PROMISED TO OTHERS!
AND ONE MORE GIFT WILL I LEAVE YOU WITH!
A GIFT FIT FOR A KING...!

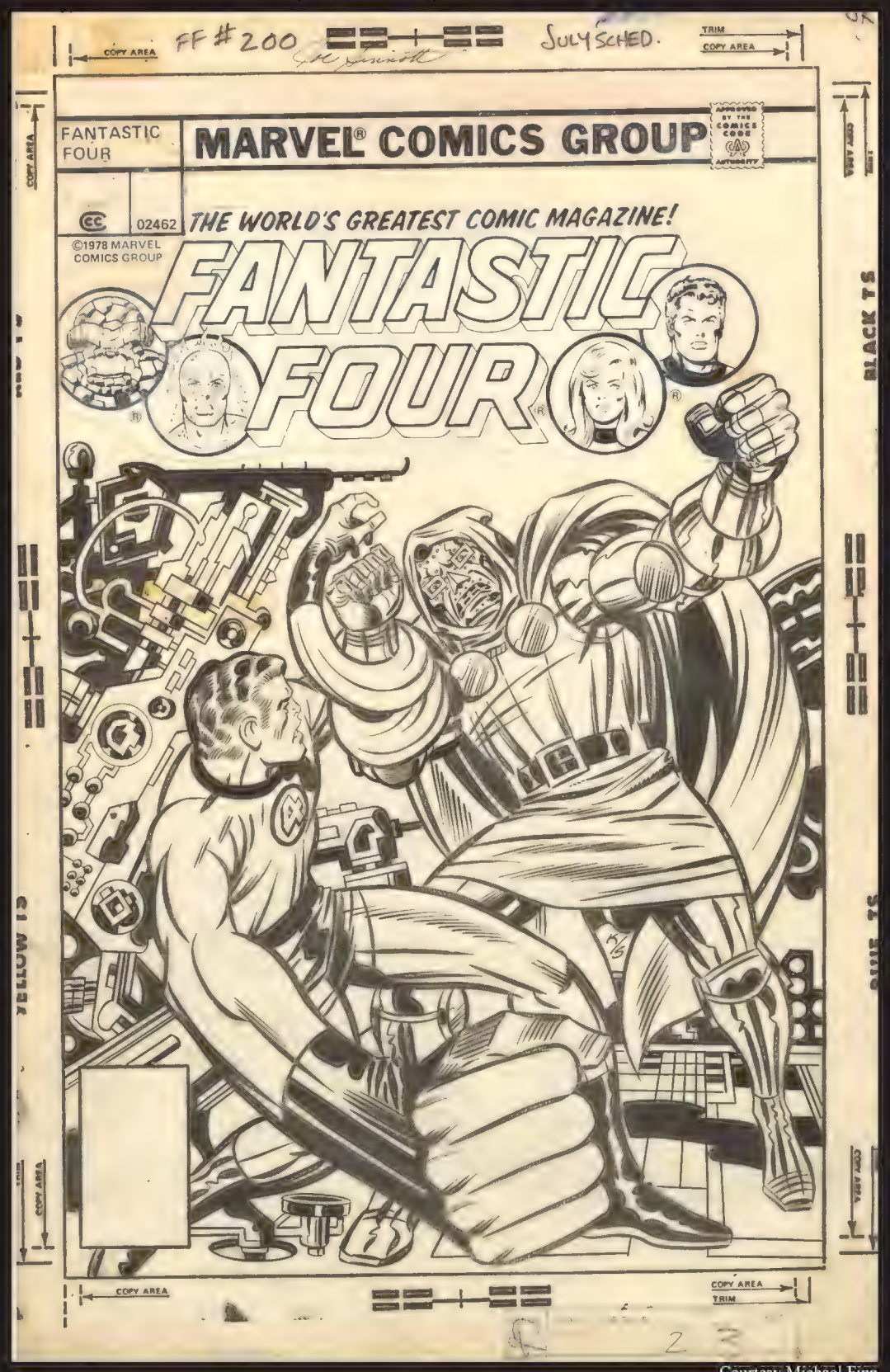

AND, SOMETIME LATER...
ALL THE STOLEN STATUES HAVE BEEN COPIED IN YOUR SUBTERRANEAN WORKSHOPS, MOLE MAN--AND ALL THOSE WHO WISH TO RETURN TO THE SURFACE WORLD ARE READY TO LEAVE!
FEW HAVE CHOSEN TO STAY... BUT THEY WILL BE MY FRIENDS--MY FIRST IN SO VERY LONG A TIME!
AND HERE IS MY GIFT, MY FRIEND! NOW IT IS ONLY CLAY--
--BUT IT WILL SERVE AS THE MODEL FROM WHICH YOU MAY CAST IT IN ANY METAL YOU CHOOSE!
THE MOLE MAN HESITATES, THEN COMES CLOSER!
HIS FINGERS BEGIN TO CARESS THE MODEL'S SURFACE--AND...WHEN NEXT HE SPEAKS...
...HIS VOICE IS CHOKED WITH EMOTION!
IT--IT IS A PRINCELY PORTRAIT, INDEED! IN GOLD SHALL I CAST IT!
SUCH NOBILITY! SUCH INTEGRITY! SUCH...HANDSOMENESS!
ALICIA MASTERS, YOU PORTRAYED ME AS I SEE MYSELF! YOU HAVE MY UNDYING GRATITUDE!
REED, I--I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING SO--SO TOUCHING!
WE'VE PLEASED AN ENEMY, DARLING--AND YET, I'M GLAD!
THAT'S SOME LADY YOU'VE GOT THERE, BENJY!
HRMMPH! I STILL CAN'T SEE IT!
AH--LET'S GO HOME!
FIN

The Fantastic Four #197 cover sketch
by Dave Cockrum



Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Fantastic Four #200 cover original art
by Jack Kirby & Joe Sinnott



Courtesy Michael Finn

The Fantastic Four #194, page 2 original art
by Keith Pollard & Dave Hunt

F.F. 194 2
--AND THE HOPES AND PRAYERS OF THOSE WHO KNEW AND LOVED HIM--
--LIE SHATTERED AND SMOKING AMIDST THE DEBRIS STREWN UPON THE DESERT FLOOR!
MS. MASTERS--LET ME HAVE ONE OF MY MEN ESCORT YOU BACK TO NASA BASE! THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO HERE!
I HEARD YOU SAY YOU WOULD DISPATCH TROOPS TO SEARCH THE SURROUNDING DESERT, CAPTAIN!
I--I WISH TO BE THERE WHEN THEY--
"--FIND THE MAN I LOVE!"
UNNHHHH...
A-ANYBODY GET THE NAME A' THE TRUCK THAT HIT ME?
OHH! NOW I REMEMBER! THE LETTERS ON THE LICENSE PLATE SPELLED OUT: D-I-A-B-L-O!
DIABLO!
'MEMBER HIM TELLIN' ME SOMETHIN' ABOUT HIS BUDDY DARKOTH --AN' THE SOLAR SHUTTLE BEIN' SABOTAGED SO'S HE COULD TAKE CONTROL OF IT WITH AN ENERGY BEAM FROM EARTH!*
*LAST ISSUE--MARV.
WHEN THE BEAM CUT OUT-- I LOST POWER AN' CRASHED!
BUT NOT BEFORE I PINPOINTED THE SOURCE A' THE TRANSMISSION OUT IN THE DESERT!
AWRIGHT, DIABLO! I GOT THROWN CLEAR, YA CREEP! I'M ALIVE!
AN' BEN GRIMM'S HUNTIN' FOR YA, YA HEAR?!
2

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Fantastic Four #195, page 7 original art
by Keith Pollard & Pablo Marcos

FANTASTIC FOUR 195 11
YOU MUST BE MORE UNDERSTANDING, NAMOR. YOU'VE SAVED THEM FROM DISASTER TIME AND TIME AGAIN YOU REVIVED THEM FROM THEIR LIVING DEATH!
IN THEIR FRENZIED ECSTACY, IT IS ONLY NATURAL FOR THEM TO THINK OF YOU AS MORE THAN A MAN.
I DISLIKE BEING DEIFIED, LORD YASHTI!
TELL THEM NAMOR IS THEIR PRINCE --LET THEM WORSHIP NEPTUNE AS THEIR GOD.
THEN YOU FORGET THE TRUTH, NAMOR. REMEMBER, EACH TIME YOU LEAVE ATLANTIS, SOME AWFUL CALAMITY BEFALLS US--
--AND EACH TIME YOU ARE NEEDED TO SAVE OUR PEOPLE FROM MORE THAN CERTAIN DOOM.
THEY LOOK AT YOU, AND WHAT DO THEY SEE? THEY SEE NAMOR THE FIRST, CROWN PRINCE OF ATLANTIS --AND WHAT DOES HE HOLD--?
NAUGHT BUT THE INVINCIBLE SCEPTRE OF NEPTUNE!
I AM NO GOD! I'LL NOT BE WORSHIPPED AS ONE!
THEN I'LL WIELD THIS TRIDENT NO MORE!
SKAK!
BUT...
LET ME THROUGH! I MUST TOUCH NAMOR! HE'LL CURE MY BLINDNESS!
HELP ME! HELP ME!
NAMOR, HEAL ME!
11
CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Fantastic Four #197, page 4 original art
by Keith Pollard & Joe Sinnott

FANTASTIC FOUR
197
4
EVERYTHING IS PERFECT... NOW TO DIS-ENGAGE THE ADJUSTING PODS!
THE TIMING MUST BE TOTALLY ACCURATE--
--EVERYTHING MUST BE AS IT WAS... OR WHEN THE COSMIC RAYS HIT--
--THEY COULD CHANGE ME INTO ANYTHING FROM A MORE-MONSTROUS VERSION OF THE HULK...
...TO A LOWLY, SQUIRMING PARAMECIUM.
THERE! COMPU-SCREEN READINGS REGISTER ".000 DIVERGENCE." HISTORY'S REPEATING ITSELF.
IT SHOULD TAKE ONLY A FEW MOMENTS FOR THE PODS TO POSITION THEMSELVES ...FOR THEM TO ALTER THE COSMIC CHAIN.
IT'S TAKEN YEARS TO PROVE MY HUNCH--THAT THE COSMIC RAYS THAT SHOWERED US WERE SLIGHTLY ALTERED BY HEIGHTENED SUN SPOT ACTIVITY, BY A FLARING OF THE VAN ALLEN BELT-- THERE WAS EVEN AN ABNORMAL INCREASE OF NEUTRON ACTIVITY THAT FATEFUL DAY WE BECAME THE F.F.
IT WAS A CHAIN OF EVENTS THAT WERE RE-PEATED ONLY ONCE SINCE THAT TIME--AND IF I CAN RECREATE EVERY LINK OF THAT CHAIN PRECISELY AS IT WAS--
--MISTER FANTASTIC WILL LIVE ONCE AGAIN!
MY HEART-BEAT'S INCREAS-ING... THE ANXIETY IS FINALLY GETTING TO ME. FUNNY, BEN ALWAYS SAID I WAS THE STAID, UN-EMOTIONAL MEMBER OF THE GROUP--
--YET NOW I'M AS NERVOUS AS A TEENAGER OUT ON HIS FIRST DATE.
ALL RIGHT, CALM DOWN NOW--SWITCH ON THE COSMIC RAY COLLECTOR-- THEN SIT BACK AND WAIT.
FROM THIS MOMENT ON-- THERE IS NO TURNING BACK!
4
CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

The Fantastic Four #198, page 4 original art
by Keith Pollard & Joe Sinnott

198
4
IMPORTANT ENOUGH FOR HIM TO HAVE KIDNAPPED MY WIFE AND FRIENDS, TO AID ME IN REGAINING MY LOST POWERS...
SRAK
...AND TO IMPORT THE WORLD'S GREATEST MINDS TO CRE-ATE MACHINERY FOR A STILL UN-KNOWN DEVICE.
WHAT IS DOOM UP TO?
AND WHY DOES HIS LIEUTENANT SEEM SO BLASTED FAMILIAR?
THERE I GO AGAIN...THINK-ING WHEN I SHOULD BE FIGHTING!
I'VE GOT TO DE-ACTIVATE THIS ROBOT, BUT WHY IS THIS BACKPLATE--?
TOO LATE! I'VE ALREADY TOUCHED IT.!
IT'S A CONDUCTIVE PLATE DESIGNED TO PREVENT TAM-PERING. BY GRABBING IT, I'VE COMPLETED THE CIRCUIT.!
FOOM
UNGGHHH!
MIND-NUMBING PAIN RIPPLES THROUGH REED'S SUDDENLY PARALYZED BODY...
SLOOSH!
HELPLESS, HE LIMPLY FALLS BACKWARDS...
6

Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

House ad promoting Marvel's team titles including *Fantastic Four* from August 1978 titles

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES!
the AVENGERS®
IRON MAN, CAPTAIN AMERICA, THE VISION, THE SCARLET WITCH, WONDER MAN, THE BEAST AND MANY MORE!
THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
FANTASTIC FOUR®
STARRING THE HUMAN TORCH, MR. FANTASTIC, THE THING AND THE INVISIBLE GIRL!
GET IN ON THE MARVEL COMICS SUPER GROUPS
ON SALE NOW!
THE MOST DYNAMIC NON-TEAM EVER!
THE DEFENDERS™
THE GREATEST SUPER-HEROES OF WORLD WAR II!
THE INVADERS™
THE ALL-NEW, ALL-DIFFERENT
X-MEN™
CAPTAIN AMERICA
THE HUMAN TORCH
UNION JACK
SUB-MARINER
SPITFIRE
THE HULK, VALKYRIE, NIGHTHAWK, HELLCAT AND A FEW SURPRISES!
CYCLOPS, PHOENIX, STORM, WOLVERINE, COLOSSUS, AND NIGHT CRAWLER!

BIOGRAPHIES

MARV WOLFMAN

Marv Wolfman's stints writing for movies, television, animation and novels mark him as a varied and highly regarded talent, but it is his comic book writing where he first gained prestige as one of the industry's most acclaimed talents.

His first forays into the comic industry were short tenures as editor and writer for both Warren Publishing and DC Comics, but it was after a move to Marvel in 1972 that his career began to blossom. One of his earliest hits was *Tomb of Dracula*, Marvel's adaptation of the classic Bram Stoker vampire. It was in the pages of *Tomb of Dracula* that Wolfman and Gene Colan unveiled the character Blade, the vampire hunter. This earthly hero was one of the earliest black heroes in comics and was introduced to further affirm the realism he sought to inject into the Dracula comic.

After editing Marvel's black-and-white magazines, he quickly stepped up the ladder to follow Len Wein as editor in chief. Wolfman had noted that the readership, who like himself had become loyal fans in their adolescence, felt it was important to have the stories Marvel produced "grow up" along with them. His editorial duties, however, stole time from his writing, so in 1976 he stepped down and took on writing full-time.

As writer of *Daredevil*, his two-year run preceded the Frank Miller era and included the introduction of Bullseye, now the most innovative and fearsome of Daredevil's rogues' gallery. Other work from his prolific Marvel tenure in the late '70s included lengthy runs on Marvel's two flagship titles: *The Amazing Spider-Man* (including the debut of the Black Cat) and *Fantastic Four* as well runs on *Nova*, *Doctor Strange* and *Thor*.

Moving to DC, he teamed with artist George Pérez and ushered in *New Teen Titans*. Most of the Titans came to life under his auspices, including Cyborg, Nightwing, Starfire, and Raven, as well as their nemesis Deathstroke. Next, Wolfman and Pérez delivered the epochal *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, condensing DC's complex 50 year history into a single, shared universe.

Taking a lengthy sabbatical from writing comics, Wolfman moved to writing for animation shows including *G.I. Joe* and *Transformers*, later becoming comics editor for *Disney Adventures Magazine*. He continues to write for DC Comics and more recently, has penned the nonfiction *Homeland, the Illustrated History of the State of Israel*. In 2011 Marv was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

KEITH POLLARD

One of its most high-profile artists in the late '70s and early '80s, Keith Pollard's tenure at Marvel was notable for his sleek, refined renderings of the company's most iconic characters. He broke in at Marvel in 1974, drawing such characters as Deathlok in *Astonishing Tales*, Shang-Chi in *Master of Kung Fu*, and the super-hero action of *Black Goliath*, *Ms. Marvel*, and Black Panther in *Jungle Action*. After a stint on the black-and-white *Rampaging Hulk* magazine, Pollard was ushered into the starting lineup of creators on three of Marvel's flagship titles.

Starting in 1978, Pollard provided breakdown art on *Fantastic Four* for the legendary Joe Sinnott to finish. Soon after landing his *FF* gig, he began penciling *The Amazing Spider-Man* and then took the reins from "Big" John Buscema on *Thor*, starting a run that would encompass the epic "Eternals Saga" storyline. All in all, Pollard's hand guided the visuals of these three prime Marvel titles simultaneously, and his tenures on each book are memorable additions to each title's legacy.

In the early '80s, Pollard took on a new stable of heroes at DC, drawing several issues of *Green Lantern* and launching *The Vigilante* with writer Marv Wolfman. He returned to regular series work at Marvel in 1989, once again drawing *Fantastic Four*. By 1995, Pollard retired from comics, although he is currently appearing at conventions and doing commissioned art for his fans.

JOHN BUSCEMA

Though primarily known for his long tenure as one of Marvel Comics' most prolific pencilers, John Buscema began his celebrated career at the age of 21 with Timely Comics. After Timely closed its in-house Bullpen, Buscema pursued comics work for a time before he left comics altogether for advertising in 1958.

When he returned to comics, however, he did so with a vengeance. Stan Lee recruited him away from advertising and quickly ensconced him into the upper ranks of Marvel artists. Picking up where *Avengers* mainstay Don Heck left off, "Big John" began what would be one of the title's definitive artistic runs. The much-anticipated *Silver Surfer* series was launched with Buscema at the helm, and top-tier books like *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* were entrusted to his care after Jack Kirby left Marvel for DC Comics.

Buscema's bold, muscular artwork commanded the comic-book page with realistic figurework that represented the next evolutionary step in post-Kirby Marvel Comics style. The respect accorded him within Marvel as an artist's artist was of such renown that he literally wrote the book on drawing, composing *How To Draw Comics the Marvel Way* with Stan Lee, the classic "how to" book in comic-book illustration.

He worked from the '70s through the '90s on nearly every title in the Marvel stable, including his personal favorite, *Conan the Barbarian*, with Roy Thomas. He retired in 1996, but returned every now and then to the comics scene until he passed away after a battle with cancer in 2002, the same year he was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

SAL BUSCEMA

Without a doubt one of comics' most prolific artists, "Our Pal" Sal Buscema joined Marvel in 1968 shortly after his elder brother, John. Tackling inking duties on *Silver Surfer* and *Fantastic Four*, including the all-time classic *Silver Surfer* #4, Buscema quickly graduated to penciling. He was an anchor of the Marvel line in the 1970s with long runs on books like *Captain America*, *Marvel Team-Up* and *The Spectacular Spider-Man* and a 100-plus issue run on *The Incredible Hulk*. Buscema was also behind defining the tone on early issues of *The Defenders*, *Rom* and *The New Mutants*. His career as one of Marvel's most versatile artists lasted throughout the '70s and into the '90s. In 1988, he returned to *The Spectacular Spider-Man* and over the next ten years penciled every issue but two from #134 through #238 (and inked the vast majority as well!) Although he retired in the late '90s, readers can still see his name on comics credits from time to time, including inking work on the cult hit *Spider-Girl*.

BOB HALL

Bob Hall has spent the entirety of his professional career balancing his twin passions of drawing and theater. A graduate of University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Hall arrived in New York City in the early '70s to pursue a career in theater. To augment his income, he took his art skills to comic books. He studied illustration under John Buscema, a tutelage which—combined with his theater-born joy of storytelling—helped set him on the path to working for Marvel. Hall's first gigs included penciling multiple issues of *The Champions* and *Super-Villain Team-Up* and annuals for *Fantastic Four* and *Thor*. He also served as an editor for a brief time, with Jack Kirby's *Devil Dinosaur* falling under his purview. In 1980, Hall's off-Broadway play, *The Passion of Dracula*, was adapted for Showtime's *Broadway on Showtime* cable television series. His art career took flight in the '80s, as Hall drew issues of *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Marvel Team-Up* and *Spectacular Spider-Man*, but his most memorable credit came during a pair of stints drawing *Avengers*. Other high-profile credits in the decade came with the *West Coast Avengers* miniseries and Mark Gruenwald's *Squadron Supreme* epic. Hall would return to the Avengers with the now-classic *Marvel Graphic Novel #27: Emperor Doom*, written by David Michelinie. In the '90s, Hall went to Valiant, where he wrote and drew *Shadowman* and *Armed and Dangerous*. In addition to his comics work, Hall has acted in and directed Shakespeare productions across the decades, culminating in his founding of the Flatwater Shakespeare Company in Lincoln, Nebraska in 2001. He serves as the company's Artistic Director and in 2010 received the honor of Artist of the Year from the Nebraska Arts Council's Governor's Arts Awards.

BILL MANTLO

From the mid-'70s through the late-'80s, Bill Mantlo established himself as one of the most dedicated writers in the comics industry, writing hundreds of stories across dozens of titles, primarily for Marvel Comics.

Mantlo broke into comics as a colorist, but it wasn't long before he was given a crack at writing a fill-in story, a "Sons of the Tiger" story in the black-and-white *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu* magazine, and his true comics talent began to emerge. The quality of his work led to his installation as that book's regular writer, a tenure that included the notable achievement of introducing comics' first Puerto Rican hero, the White Tiger.

After achieving notoriety within the Marvel offices as a guy who could knock out credible fill-in scripts at a moment's notice, Mantlo was given more regular work. One early highlight was his 20-issue tenure on *Iron Man* that began the Golden Avenger's return to prominence. As one might expect from someone with such a volume of work, Mantlo was game to take on projects others dismissed, and he did it with an unfeigned aplomb that elevated the work.

It was on two licensed titles that Mantlo built his legacy. Inspired by a toy given to his son at Christmas, Mantlo lobbied Marvel to adapt Micronauts into an ongoing series. The award-winning epic he spun with artistic luminaries like Michael Golden and Pat Broderick is still highly revered by comics fandom as is his even longer run on *Rom*, wherein he developed a universe filled with Spaceknights, Dire Wraith monsters and outer space intrigue. Other notable credits in Mantlo's career include *Incredible Hulk*, *Alpha Flight* and *Spectacular Spider-Man.*

Just as Mantlo had begun a new career as a public defender with the New York City Legal Aid Society, he was struck by a hit-and-run driver and went into a weeks-long coma from severe head trauma. He has since been under constant medical care. The comics community has led multiple fundraisers to aid in the continuing care of a talented writer who is missed by his many fans.

GEORGE PÉREZ

George Pérez's intricately detailed style and incomparable ability at drawing team books has made him one of comics' most popular artists. Like many of his early-'70s peers, Pérez broke in at Marvel drawing for their burgeoning line of black-and-white magazines, most notably the "Sons of the Dragon" feature in *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu*. It was there he and Bill Mantlo introduced the Puerto Rican hero White Tiger. His first major work came during the latter half of the decade, where he became regular artist of both *Fantastic Four* and *Avengers* before a move to DC. There he took over *Justice League of America* from the late, long-running artist Dick Dillin, but it was a Marv Wolfman-scribed revival of DC's team of teen super heroes, *New Teen Titans*, that was a huge hit, owing especially to Pérez's evocative character designs and masterful line. He would work with Wolfman on the book for over six years. During this time the duo also helmed the epic miniseries *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, featuring the deaths of classic heroes like the Flash and Supergirl.

In 1987, he broadened his creative credentials with his first regular writing gig on *Wonder Woman*, a title he would also draw for the better part of five years. A return to Marvel in 1998 produced a chart-topping revival of *Avengers* with writer Kurt Busiek. This led the creative tandem to the popular DC/Marvel cross-company miniseries *JLA/Avengers*. His most recent credits include a 10-issue run drawing DC's *Brave and the Bold*, and a stint as writer/artist of a new *Superman* series.

ROGER SLIFER

A member of the CPL Gang, an Indiana-based group of fanzine-publishing comic enthusiasts that included Roger Stern, Tony Isabella, John Byrne and others, Roger Slifer was a versatile member of the Marvel Bullpen during the early half of his 10 years in the comics industry. Initially charged with cowriting and deadline scripting, he eventually began plotting, lettering, coloring, and editing books as well. His name could be found occasionally in the writing credits of books like *Defenders*, *Marvel Two-In-One*, *Iron Man*, and *Power Man*, but by the early '80s his coloring schedule was keeping him a very busy man. In 1982, he took an editorial position at DC and also launched *Omega Men* with Keith Giffen. It was in that book that the writer/artist combo introduced the character for which Slifer would be most remembered, the anti-hero Lobo. In the mid-'80s, Slifer switched fields, going from comics to animated television, with producer and writing credits on popular shows like *Transformers*, *My Little Pony*, *Jem and the Holograms*, *G.I. Joe*, and *Superman*. In June 2012, a hit-and-run accident left Slifer with a traumatic brain injury. He passed away in March 2015 due to complications from the accident.

LEN WEIN

Len Wein's career is highlighted by successes from Swamp Thing to the "All-New, All-Different" X-Men, but few fans know that the award-winning writer and editor started out as a comic-book artist.

As a teenager, Wein was tied to the hip with fellow fanzine writer Marv Wolfman, regularly skipping school to tour the DC Comics offices. After building a rapport with artists and execs like Dick Giordano, Carmine Infantino and Joe Orlando, Wein was able to credibly pitch to the editors. Though his artwork was politely passed upon, a script for *House of Mystery* was accepted and a career as a writer was born. Len attacked his new occupation with gusto, writing for DC, Marvel, Gold Key and Skywald, on everything from Western to horror, and licensed properties from Hot Wheels to Star Trek.

Although his desired career as an artist didn't quite pan out, it did give Wein insight into his collaborator's creative process and helped him garner acclaim as a writer that was "easy to draw." After super-hero work in the early '70s (Daredevil, Superman, Flash), he and artist Bernie Wrightson launched horror mainstay Swamp Thing in the pages of *House of Secrets* #92. Other notable achievements from his tenure at DC include a run on *Justice League of America* and the debut of the Human Target.

Hopping over to Marvel in 1974, where he followed Roy Thomas as editor in chief, Wein scripted several series, including *Incredible Hulk*, where he and artist Herb Trimpe introduced one of comics' most famous characters—Wolverine. That wasn't the end of his mutant milestones, as with artist Dave Cockrum he revived the dormant X-Men property with a new international cast. Its cadre of characters, including Storm, Nightcrawler and Colossus would shortly turn into comics' biggest phenomenon.

Returning to DC, Wein helped spur a creative revival at the company, editing *New Teen Titans*, *Camelot 3000* and *Swamp Thing*, which gave writer Alan Moore his American debut; shortly thereafter, Wein would preside over Moore and Dave Gibbon's groundbreaking *Watchmen*. Since then, Wein's credits in comics, animation and television writing have been numerous and well received as witnessed by his 2008 induction into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

Biographies researched and written by John Rhett Thomas

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THE MARVEL AGE

It was August 1961 and change was hitting the newsstands. *Fantastic Four* #1 did not feature the squeaky-clean heroes of yesteryear. These were real characters placed in extraordinary circumstances. They lived together, they fought among themselves—and sometimes, they even lost to the bad guys. This was more than a change in attitude: It was the beginning of something entirely different—the Marvel Age of Comics!

Thanks to the fertile imaginations of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and others, an unending list of heroes followed the FF with ever-increasing acclaim and popularity: the Amazing Spider-Man, the Mighty Thor, the Incredible Hulk, Daredevil, Iron Man and the X-Men, to name but a few. These were the Marvel heroes, born of conflict and a continuous struggle to balance human lives with superhuman responsibilities.

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THE GOLDEN AGE

As the Great Depression wore on and the specter of war hung over the heads of all Americans, a new entertaining escape from the newspapers' horrifying realities was born: the comic book. Within their four-color pages, larger-than-life super heroes could make short work of America's foes, giving readers of all ages hope for victory against the real-life enemies that faced the United States.

At the forefront of this new medium was Timely Comics, a young company staffed by such legendary talents as Carl Burgos, Bill Everett, Joe Simon, Jack Kirby and Stan Lee. These skilled writers and artists created a vast array of characters that would give rise to the Marvel Universe!

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THE ATLAS ERA

Seeing super heroes waning, Timely Comics evolved into Atlas Comics and took on a vast new range of genres: science-fiction tales of outer space adventures and unimaginable monsters; realistic war comics; buxom jungle heroines; horror comics that would become the center of a moral panic that rocked the industry; and romance comics for the emerging teen audience. Even the classic costumed heroes of the '40s retooled to take on the threat of Communism. From Western gunfighters to crime to horror, Atlas had it all!

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